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Demon Girl ~Tale of a Lax Demon~

Book 5 - I Saw Demons in my Dreams

by Day Of Spring

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Chapter 0: The Prelude for Part 2

As space-time violently rippled, the shattered human soul was sent through the torrent of the dimensions.

It was a storm of emptiness raging in a void that had nothing.

“I” dreamt in that violent whirlpool.

Beautiful, gentle parents... Living as a noble... Smiling towards servants...

Golden hair... Black hair... little friends.

A big castle... a splendid king... a little boy with a defiant face...

A boy with earnest eyes that held a sword.....

And...

The sweet smell of overflowing blood...

A dark sky... A dark world...

Thousands of grotesque monsters, all kneeling before me...

Four boys and a girl...

An enormous cat... dark like ink...

Reflected in its eyes.....

A golden cat.

I quietly dreamed it all.

A wall that was made to stop “Me”, that had enormous power, And a great force called out for “Me”.

Someone was calling.

An unknown voice...? No, I know this voice. A boy...? A girl...?

I faintly heard the quiet whine of a “Beast”.

Were you... calling out to me?

“.....Ah, you’re awake.”

When I opened my eyes, the white light shone against my eyes. I heard someone's voice in the background that was still blurry to me.

A young woman...? But for some reason it's a nostalgic feeling.

My body wouldn't move. I felt like I was asleep.

"Ah, hold on, don't get up yet."

I kept pushing against the lady that was holding my body down, but she pulled me into an embrace and touched her forehead to mine. It's a little... cold and pleasant.

"Mm... the fever's gone down. You've had a terrible fever and been asleep since yesterday morning. The women were making a terrible commotion. Hey, aren't you hungry?"

".....No"

A small voice came out. But it felt a little different. Was it because of fever? It seemed like it'd been a long time since I'd gotten sick...

"Is that so...? Then, shall I peel some fruit for you? You won't get better if you don't eat something, you know."

In my field of vision that gradually widened, I saw a girl smiling at me.

A spirited girl with black hair and eyes... that looked like a junior high school student.

Someone I don't know...? But, it felt like I knew her.

A nostalgic smile. A bright room that I feel like I've seen somewhere.

A flower-patterned wallpaper. Crayon graffiti. A colorful picture book. A stuffed teddy bear.

A large cushion that had faded colors. A small white chair and desk.

At that scene... tears fell unbidden from my eyes even as I was unaware because of that nostalgic feeling.

"What's wrong?"

The girl's voice was surprised, and hugged me gently, stroking my head

quietly.

A big hand..... No, I'm just small.

"I saw a scary dream... It's okay..... Yuzu....."

Chapter 1: I became Yuzu, Part 1

“Your memory must be muddled.....? Yuzu, do you not remember us?”

“Kotone, you’re being too loud. You’re going to upset the poor girl.”

“Well, Yuzu remembers some things, but it seems like she’s forgotten things too. When she reads picture books or watches movies that we watched together, she might have all of these memories mixed up because of the heat, and can’t distinguish reality from fiction.”

“This..... is it not curable?”

“The doctor said that it should settle over time.....”

“Yuzu’s body is rather delicate, so don’t try to forcibly remind her. You might make her even more damaged and cause her to run a fever again.”

“Understood.....”

“I understand, Father.”

..... I heard that conversation coming from the living room.

Father, Mother, and my elder brother and sister were talking.

... If you don’t want me to hear, you guys should really lower your voices...

“.....Fuu...”

I was thinking of heading from the top of the stairs to the bottom, the living room, but when I heard my family’s voices, I sighed and turned back towards my room where I had been sleeping up until a while ago.

The room was far away and quiet. Although it was only two stories, I think that it is quite a big house, having six rooms on the second floor... what is this house?

Still, I felt like it was far away as I was tiny.

I was a little girl whose height only reached the doorknob, a 5-year-old girl.....

“Yuzu,” apparently.

Was my memory cloudy.....? I certainly didn't know what my name was until it was said, but it felt like the mixed memories were really real as well... did I ever see a movie like that?

Still, I certainly remembered more things whenever I looked at the inside of the house or met with the family. But, not all of it. There were a lot of things that I didn't remember despite being shown a picture.

I wonder if I could live a decent life like this.

Yesterday, after I cried in that room, I didn't remember that that girl was my "Onee-chan" and I was attended to by my Father and Mother who had come back from their work in a panic, before being taken to the university hospital.

So when the doctor said that my memory was going to be this way, I was like 'mmhmm I see' but my parents were rather dismayed.

Well, I'm still about 5 years old, so if I live normally in the future, all the memories that I've jumbled up will become filled with new memories..... if I am an ordinary 5 year old.

Even though I said this myself, but I don't think that this was naive because of the strange memories.

In the fragmented, cloudy, memories, a black-haired me was wearing a uniform and attending junior high, and then I was golden-haired and in a European-style castle.

Because of that I could act like an adult and keep myself quiet, and while wondering if something was wrong, I was forced to go straight to bed.

Because of that, I am very busy now. But until I settled down for them, both the picture books and the TV of the room were sealed from me.

And so, since I couldn't sleep since I was feverish, I went downstairs and heard my family talking about that.

Well, it's nice to return to my room, but there's really nothing to do. I'm not allowed to sleep on the adults' bed.

For the time being, I decided to take a look at myself in the full-length mirror that was in my room. I don't remember my face that well, either.

“.....Ah, so that’s my face.”

When I looked at myself in the mirror, there was a black-haired girl in a thin pink negligee.

I don’t remember, but I thought to myself that I looked pretty... If one looked at themselves in the mirror and felt uncomfortable, they’d only feel anxiety about life in the future, after all.

I wasn’t very worried, because my onee-chan was cute too, but my face was actually quite good for a young child... it’s just a bit... unnatural.

And there’s that too... As a rich person, it seems that being a beautiful wife and mother and a groom have been arranged for.

But my eyes are droopy... Onee-chan resembled mother and looked ordinary, but I looked like a dead grandma with slightly droopy eyes.

When I looked at myself I looked sleepy. Indeed, if anyone saw me, they’d definitely say I should go to bed as soon as possible.

Well, it’s alright. Because my hair was shiny black and glossy, I looked like an adorable little lady.

“Ah ah ah, Yuzu, it’s no good if you don’t go to bed.”

While I was thinking about that, my onee-chan came into my room saw me in front of the mirror and called out loudly to me.

“Kotone..... Onee-chan?”

As I spoke out her name with almost no confidence, Kotone-onee-chan looked lonely for a moment... but then immediately smiled and lifted me up. It was unexpectedly powerful.

“That’s right, it’s Kotone-onee-chan~. Let’s go to bed, Yuzu.”

“.....But, I’m not sleepy.”

“Oh well..... but only one picture book, okay.”

Togaki Kotone. My older sister. A third year student attending junior high. 14 years old. She’s got quite the age gap with me.

As you can plainly tell, onee-chan is very kind to me. It seems that it was

caused by her lonely childhood, because both father and mother have been busy with their jobs and couldn't be home much.

There were domestic helpers, but because they weren't live-in helpers they returned home in the evenings.

Because she was often with her elder brother who was two years older than her alone in this large house, the two of them were very pleased that the number of family members had increased, and a sister with a great age gap, regardless of day or night I was beloved. so it seemed.

I'm sorry, but I don't know for sure because my memory is hazy. Still it is pretty easy to imagine from the current state of affairs.

"Yuzu, I brought you pudding."

When Kotone onee-chan put away the picture book, another person came into the room to pacify me with pudding.

Togaki Ohba. My onii-chan. A second-year in a private high school. 16 years old.

Errr..... why didn't you knock? This is a girl's room, onii-chan.

A five-year-old child really has no privacy.

"Aah, onii-chan, I was going to bring that over later to Yuzu."

"Well, it's alright for anyone to do it. Didn't Kotone buy it?"

"So give me half, and give Yuzu half to eat."

It was decided that I would eat it before I knew it.

Pudding..... I felt like it had been a long time. Of course, there is no child that hates pudding, so I was very pleased to get it.

Now that I mention it, when I got up, I was given an un-tasty sports drink and tasteless rice gruel but my hunger hasn't abated at all. I didn't notice it, but am I really ill?

"Here, Yuzu, say ah~"

"...a, Ah~n"

I was a little embarrassed. It's because I don't have the mental age of a five year old or as a younger sister, so even if it's onii-chan, it's embarrassing to have a boy that age take care of me.

But I'll take it.

"....."

"Is it delicious?"

".....Y-yes."

..... Oh no. What's this... I can't taste it?

I thought that my sense of taste had become strange because of my fever, but my fever is already fading, and I can taste the eggs, milk, and sugar properly.

I wonder what I should say..... From the pudding, I could feel the "richness" and "umami" of the egg and the milk. Perhaps the porridge that the helper made was also supposed to be delicious..... Maybe I did something bad by not finishing it and leaving it.

"Would you like to eat ice cream next?"

"If you eat only cold things you'll ruin your stomach. Onee-chan will make you a hotcake."

"No! It's okay. I'm sleepy now that I ate."

I shook my head at onee-chan's cheerful proposal. I'm sorry, but any more of this ascetic behavior is impossible for me.

Maybe ice-cream would be a soft sugared ice, but hotcake sounds like it'll be nothing but the taste of burnt flour.

It seems... I am strange.

I know things and understand things that I shouldn't. I don't get hungry. I can't taste food.

As I laid down on the fancy bed to rest, Kotone onee-chan laid with me until I fell asleep, but she smelled like a very sweet fruit.....

I felt for some reason like *she* was very 'delicious'.....

Chapter 2: I became Yuzu, Part 2

It's been a week since I got permission to go out. Up until then, I hadn't taken a step from home and haven't even gone to kindergarten.

That's right. I am a "Kindergartener" now.

..... what kind of face should I make if I want to go to kindergarten?

Because I was still sick, I heard that I would be accompanied by Kotone-onee-chan when I went out. In other words: I can't be allowed out alone. Onii-chan wanted to come along, but his schedule and onee-chan's didn't match, and it had been arranged to match her schedule.

It seems that I'll be escorted by the chauffeur instead.

.....eh? This is such a big household that we have a chauffeur?

Well, I heard that Father ran a food processing company with around 500 employees, and Mother was a director of accounts in a foreign company that did cosmetics.

How did the two of them even meet...?

Our family wasn't one of those conglomerate households, nor were we among the rich, but since onee-chan and onii-chan were going to prestigious schools, I think that it was a necessity to commute by car.

I'm afraid of stepping into high society. I didn't realize it since I usually ate convenience store pudding and natto at home.

.....By the way, did you know? Natto without its flavor is just rotten beans.

Anyway, since I seem to have gone off on a tangent, I'm going out for my rehabilitation.

If I was a genuine high-class lady, I think I'd be wearing custom-made clothes when I head out into the neighborhood, no? Still, although I'm wearing ordinary clothes I still feel unwilling to buy new items at the department store each time my size changes, since I'm a child.

.....My way of thinking is surprisingly plebian.

Anyway, Kotone-onee-chan... sorry, that's too troublesome to say... "Kotone-chan" and I headed to a municipal park that was about 30 minutes away by car. Oh, but of course I'll usually call her "Kotone onee-chan," though.

As for why we were going to a remote metropolitan park, it was because they thought that it would be less dangerous in a more populated park than in a small park that was nearby.

Outside the window, the scenery of the city flowed by..... But since we didn't talk at all about my memories, we arrived at the park just like that. Dropping Kotone-onee-chan and I off at the entrance, the driver went to park the car.

Although it's a large park, I don't see anyone sunbathing on the grass like in a foreign country. Instead, there's housewives jogging normally and people who were walking their dogs, and there're also signs for hot dog stands and shops selling soft-serves.

"Yuzu, don't walk off on your own, okay?"

"Yes~"

I was afraid that my legs would atrophy because I hadn't gone about in a week, but as I ran around a little, I was relieved that I could run normally.

It seems that it's dangerous if I wander out of sight of Kotone-chan, and there's a little freedom.

"I should have brought some toys to play with Yuzu."

"What kind of toys?"

"Hmmm~..... Frisbee...?"

Please stop. I can't retrieve it.

Somehow my strides were different from how I thought they should be and I fell down rolling, but since it was in the grass it didn't hurt. While I fell a few times, I got used to running quite a bit.

But I have no physical strength. Come to think of it, I think I was told that my body wasn't very strong, and that I would run out of breath when I ran about 100 meters.

This must be what they meant by having no physical strength. With myself in such a condition, there's no way I can go with other children in kindergarten. While I was thinking while running, it seems I've gotten a distance away from Kotone-chan.

“.....ah,”

A small noise leaked out from my mouth.

In front of me, there was an older man with no defense on his scalp that was pulling along a very big dog that had short fur. If it was a medium-sized dog it's all well and good for it to be seen in the park, but I think that to bring such a large dog into a park where there's a small infant is a breach of etiquette.

In short, the problem is that I just jumped out in front of this huge dog that looked like a hunting dog.

“Yuzu!”

I heard Kotone's voice coming from the distance.

But the dog owner didn't even notice my existence even with that yell.

Although this is just my perspective, I had the impression that people that were larger in height and width were oblivious to their surroundings so that they didn't have to look around too much.

This man was exactly that type. Even though he knew that the dog that he owned could easily kill an infant with a bite, he thought that his dog was different, and even if it wasn't, he believed that others would avoid him and be wary.

..... in this case, it's my fault for being careless.

“[.....Guruu...]”

The big dog saw me. I, too, looked at the dog.

It's a big, black dog... but, I'm not too scared.

In spite of myself, I stretched out my hands to pat the dog, and smiled gently. Hey... it's not scary?

“[Kyaaaaaaain!!!!]”

“Betty-chan!?”

Suddenly, the doggy raised up a sorrowful cry and tried to drag away the confused pet owner, and disappeared out of sight quickly.

““ ””

After watching that scene, when Kotone-chan came running to me, she had an equally stunned expression, like myself who was still holding out my hand.

..... What’s the meaning of this!?

“.....I think we should go home for now.”

“.....Yes.”

Kotone-chan had a somewhat tired expression on her face as she said so, and I nodded honestly as I felt that the mood had been ruined.

Was I scared? I don’t know. It doesn’t make sense.

Although it’s a little earlier than scheduled, but I decided to go home, and the driver brought the car up from the parking lot to the park entrance.

“Would you like to get some juice from the shop?”

“.....just water.”

“Eh~..... My throat got thirsty in the car, so let’s go get some.”

Apparently, Kotone-chan wants to get a drink. I’ll pass, sorry. Juice that isn’t tasty is harder to drink than plain sugar water.

“.....Oh?”

“Yuzu, what’s wrong?”

“I..... heard a voice.”

“A voice.....?”

At my words, Kotone-chan craned her neck at me with a strange expression. Was it my imagination.....? No, it’s not, I heard it again. Something breaking in the distance..... and someone screaming.

It’s getting closer..... little by little.

“I don’t hear anything..... Ah, the car’s here. I’m sorry, I’m going to get some drinks.”

“Ah, Kotone-onee-chan”

bakibakibaki!!!

The instant that I called out to her, there came a big truck crashing into the park, breaking through the fence and the shrubbery behind the shop.

“Hee~!”

Kotone-chan froze at the suddenness of the event.

I heard a scream in the vicinity. The truck didn’t slow down and continued to plow straight ahead.

“Onee-chan”

“Yuzu, come here now!”

I was running to Kotone-chan’s side.

..... I saw it. The world around me swam slowly, and the truck driver’s eyes met mine.

He was smiling while blowing bubbles from his mouth, Eyes that were erratic and bloodshot.....

He had obviously gone insane.

And clearly... he was looking at me, and aiming for “me”?

Kotone-chan clung onto me as I stopped my feet.

Feeling myself trembling, as if bubbling up from the bottom of my heart, some kind of [Emotion] filled me.

“[.....What are you doing with to onee-chan.....]”

Looking over the shoulder of Kotone-chan who was hugging me, the face of the driver who ought to have gone insane cramped in fear, the birds and pigeons in the park few away in fear *for some reason*.

As the truck approached ever closer, I put out my hand in front of me, gently...

And with *one hand*, I caught the truck.

Gigagagan!!!

Like a small car colliding with a train, like a motorbike smashing into a concrete-reinforced bollard, it jumped up and over us contrary to its inertia, and rolled across the beautiful lawn, scraping it.

Screams and shouts of anger came from around us. In the midst of the confusion, I pulled Kotone-chan, who was still in a blank daze up, and quickly left the park before we got caught.

What... am I?

Chapter 3: I became a kindergartener, Part 1

Because of the strange *incident* that had happened at the park where I was, my prohibition on going out was extended another two weeks. Incidentally, there haven't been rumors about me either. Even if there were witnesses, nobody would believe such a thing had happened.

It seems that the apparent reason why the prohibition got extended was because I had gotten a shock from the scene of the accident.

Well, to be honest, I've been crestfallen for a while.

After all..... how was I able to do such a thing.....?

I don't understand myself. For I that, until now, couldn't even bend a spoon, I didn't know at all that I could do such a thing.

Still, in that instant where I felt anger against that [Existence] that had frightened Kotone-chan, I don't know why, but I suddenly felt like "I could do it".

..... well, there's no point in worrying about what I don't understand. It seems that I chafe at difficulty.

Anyways, beyond all of that, I'm going back to kindergarten starting today.

..... is it alright for me?

"You grew so well, Yuzu, you're so cute."

The kindergarten uniform made me look about three times cuter than I thought.

It looks amazingly expensive.

As for why the uniform is such, it seems that it's because of Kotone-chan and onii-chan, who are in Takamine Academy, which is affiliated to the kindergarten.

..... how much does it cost for these clothes that will only be worn for a couple of years??

Well, the tuition fees are high, but children from ordinary families are also enrolled. It might be that an ordinary family would get the uniforms through net auctions or maybe they wear hand-me-downs.

So... I think my family is somewhere in the upper-middle class?

For the time being, I'm quietly attending kindergarten. There are also children of families who have relationships with Father's company, so although I'm not normal I'm not going to feign friendliness.

My appearance reminds me of one of those high-class daughters if I was older.

..... However, there's still some problems.

I feel like my appearance changed subtly since I woke up.

Although my aged, droopy-eyed expression hasn't changed, it feels like a subtle "distortion" has disappeared.

Even when I wake up in the morning, my eyelids aren't puffy. My face is also less puffy.

I had good skin since I was a child, but it was now strangely glossy, and my sunburns faded back into my original skin color, but the skin looked whiter even while my complexion got better.

And it seems improbable, but I think my features are now perfectly symmetrical.....

It feels like an elaborate [Human-shaped Bisque doll] rather than a human..... I do.

".....Haa~..."

"What's wrong, Yuzu, you're seriously cute today."

Ooba Onii-chan hugged me and took me to the car.

Kotone-chan also wanted to hold me, but because of the size difference it seems that my uniform would crease if she did and become disorderly. For some reason the words "hugging personnel" came to mind.

Even then, my hair was tied by Kotone-chan. The hair that reached my collars

was tied into a small pair of twintails with red ribbons.

Uwaa..... It's cute if I looked at it objectively, but at the same time it's embarrassing.

A real twin tail, is this a certain consumer-electronics street (read: Akihabara), or am I in some Catholic school that's being watched over by a goddess?

..... It's because I think about these things that I'm told my memory has become hazy.

The car came to pick us up and send me to kindergarten, which started early, then to the middle and high school sections which were next door.

I can't even recall the faces of my kindergarten classmates, and I worried if this was okay, but it seems that that matter had been made known well in advance.

Besides, if I saw their face, I might remember. So said the goddess-sama..... hmm, for some reason it feels like I don't have the protection of the "gods".

"Yuzu, if you get into trouble you can ask the teacher to call for me, okay?"

"No, it's better to call for me, if any boy decides to bully you, onii-chan will take care of them, okay."

".....I'm going."

I got out of the car in front of the kindergarten, and was accompanied by the teacher who came to pick me up as I entered the compound. Sorry, teacher, but I don't remember.

*

".....In short, because Yuzu has just recovered from an illness, please treat her kindly, everyone."

""""Yes~""""

"....."

What do I do? The teacher seems to have omitted the fact that I don't remember things. It can't be helped. I just don't understand the difficulties of a kindergartener.

I was surrounded with some distance. I managed to remember some faces somewhat, but it just doesn't come to me. A barrier was put up separating us automatically.

It might be because of the change in my appearance... The Yuzu that they knew seemed somewhat different, and they might be scared of me who seemed to resemble a doll.

I'm in trouble now. "I" was remarkably carefree about my change.

"Yuzu-chan..... are you alright?"

There was a tough guy speaking to me.

I was a little bit surprised and turned to look, there was this *tiny* little cutey looking at me with a worried expression.

".....Ah, erm....."

For some reason I felt like I played with this boy. But his name eluded me.

That boy gave me a harmless smile.

"Yeah, it's alright, I heard from my father. My name is Handsome, remember?"

"Han..... oh, I remember."

In an instant, my whole back was covered in a cold sweat, and I felt like my consciousness was about to fly off.

Come to think of it, I remember hearing from Father yesterday that there was a boy with such a name. I thought at that time that he was joking with me.....

When I hear it from the person himself, the destructive power of it is outrageous. What were this child's parents thinking when they gave him this name? Recently, I heard that such fancy and sparkling names were popular, but for them to evolve this far..... Were they unable to cancel the evolution?

Oh crap, my face is making various expressions.

But if I scrunch my nose in I lose. He's the scion of a famous meat processing company's president and a major client of father's company.

The capital of his company and the number of employees were at national

levels, with completely different orders of magnitude.

“I’m so glad... I, had been worried.”

“Sorry.....”

He had a pleasant plump smile on his face. Apparently, he has no doubts whatsoever about his own name..... the industry’s power is indeed deep.

While I spoke with him, memories of him gradually came to light. He was quite the carefree character, but because of his body shape, he was getting teased by the stronger boys in the class.

He was also biased towards our friendship, and played mostly only with children whose houses were like mine.

It’s more than I deserve..... As the scion of a large enterprise, with a good personality and looks..... he was cute like a stuffed toy, but had few friends whom he approved of.

Was he easy to remember because he’d had a big impact on me.....?

“Yuzu-chan, shall we play over there?”

“Yes..... but, are you alright with me?”

When you’re with me, aren’t you scaring off the other children? I thought so, but he blushed a little and shook his head.

“It’s because Yuzu-chan is gentle that I get teased.erm, but... **you’re cute**”

“.....nn?”

“Oh, that’s right! Would you like some snacks?”

“.....”

Even though it’d only been one hour since kindergarten began, he’s already taken out a majestic “snack” for me.

So I thought while receiving a round ham.

..... Please let me stay thin.

Chapter 4: I became a kindergartener, Part 2

“.....Yuzu-chan, what’s this?”

“.....Zo-san”

For the [Tsubaki group] in my kindergarten, it was time to play with clay.

Although we all started to clumsily play with the clay when the teacher whose name I still cannot remember said [Let’s make our favorite animal today], I was thinking of a strange looking thing which felt a little off, and, as a result, I ended up trying really hard.

“..... What’s this?”

In front of me were several avant-garde-ish objects which each asserted a strange uniqueness.

Handsome-kun said as much without meaning harm.urgk, even if I say his name in my thoughts it makes me receive damage.

Since he’s such a carefree child, I was working on this with light thoughts, however; as a result, the child sitting opposite me began to cry before I’d even spent five minutes making my things.

..... is it that bad?

I certainly didn’t feel like I had dexterous fingers, but to think that I was that bad with handicrafts...

“Haah... oh my... Wha-what did you make?”

“This? It’s a Japanese shorthorn.”

“.....unn??”

Indeed..... it’s the cow that produces my favorite meat. As expected of the scion of a famous meat processing company.

..... the darkness of the food industry runs deep.

It’s recess, now.

All boys ran into the garden. Half the girls also went outside, while the other

half went to the corner to play where the building blocks and picture books were.

As Handsome-kun took out a frankfurter from his cooler box, I grasped his hands to stop him.

“Yuzu-chan.....?”

“Han, Hyamu-kun, do you want to go outside to play?”

I bit myself on his name. But I kept at it.

“Well~ umm, what about my food...”

“Let’s go now...okay?”

“.....Yes, I’ll play with Yuzu-chan.”

I tightly grasped his hands to stop him from grabbing more meat, and he took them with a smile.

Please go on a diet. I’ll have him lose weight to make sure that he can make friends properly and not be teased.

What to do with my friend? Well~..... what other girls in kindergarten play?

In the end, I spent the recess taking a walk while holding his hand. Handsome-kun didn’t have much physical strength, but I don’t have any strength either now.

Why were the teachers looking at us strangely with such warm eyes...

The next period is English. Engurishu... as expected of the kindergarten affiliated to Takamine School; a gifted education even from early childhood.

However, it’s still the English education of kindergarten, after all. Anyway, were they going to line up the blocks on which ABC is written? Or so I thought. An English picture book was placed in front of me.

..... eh? Can you all read this? I looked around, and understood two things.

An ordinary child from a normal family was playing with the child next to him without opening the book at all. Even if the teachers saw it, they didn’t scold them. They’re being completely ignored.

Aah..... I understand now, we're being *sorted*. If we were left as we were now, then our education will likely change as we get separated into classes when we advanced to elementary school.

Some of the children were actually opening the English book and reading normally.

"Yuzu-chan, this is interesting."

".....yes"

What should I do? Did I read these books normally before I lost my memory, or did I give up and just play instead?

Since it couldn't be helped even if I worried about it, I tried opening the recommended picture book Handsome-kun handed to me.

Yeah, it's written horizontally..... But, what?

"Is something wrong?"

"No..."

I can read it..... I don't know how, but I can read it.

I understand English if it was individual words, but I don't know them when they're strung into sentences.

However, when I stared at them, I could "see" the meanings of the words and the flow of the sentence that would be expressed in a form that I understood.

To put that into words, English came easily from my mouth.

"You, you're good at English, huh."

It wasn't Handsome-kun who was saying that.

Turning to look at the voice that came from behind me, there was a pretty boy with light brown hair there smiling with his blue-black eyes.

"Oh, it's Kouki-kun"

"Yaa, Handsome."

".....*twitch*"

My cheeks were tightening at hearing someone else call Handsome by his

name so casually. it's pretty hard to get used to. Maybe my is soul rejecting it.

Anyway, he's another friend of Handsome-kun and he's quite the good-looking boy.

Several girls that were holding picture books came along behind Kouki-kun..... you're being shadowed. Heh, he's not very manly, but it seems like he's a [Prince-sama]-like existence.

"You must be Togaki-san's daughter..... are you not?"

"eh..... yes."

It seems that he knew things about me too. It seems like they aren't exactly friends, but maybe they knew each other through their fathers' work?

".....Fuuuh~"

Kouki-kun looked at my face with a strange expression... he moved closer and closer. Hey, pretty boy..... the girls behind you are getting noisy.

"Your impression has changed quite a bit..... I remember being ahead in English in the past....."

Kouki-kun came over while looking at the children playing in English,

It seems that I was previously part of that group. I assume that it's a good thing that he said that [My impression has changed]? Is it about my appearance?

I was aware that it wasn't normal, but it's not like some strange 'power', is it?

" "....." "

I smiled unintentionally at them. Is this a five-year-old? Amazing. I can't tell anything about people.

".....Kouki-kun, Yuzu-chan"

Handsome-kun's voice got louder as he held my hand tightly. It didn't surprise me, but rather Kouki-kun.

"..... Handsome, your voice is really loud. Yeah, that's better "

Kouki-kun smiled as he looked between Handsome and I.

“Well, Yuzu-chan? Handsome seems to be on very good terms with you.”

“Ah,..... yes, Han... tch..... Sam-kun is a friend.....”

I bit myself again. I can't say his name with a straight face, because it feels really..... 'strange'.

“Ah... So you call him Sam. That's pretty good. Can I call you that too?”

“Aah, yes, it's alright.”

Sam!? What an American nickname!?

I don't know whether it's because Handsome isn't particularly attached to his name or that he gave up, but he is purely Japanese, so calling him Sam is pretty tough.

“No, that isn't it.”

” “.....?” ”

Due to my unintentional interruption, the two of them who were smiling at each other turned to look at me strangely.

I stopped in spite of myself, but what should I do now!? Is Sam preferable to Handsome? No, well..... think, me.

“I..... find “Ouji” easier to call you by..... I think.”

On the spur of the moment, that nickname leaked out of my mouth.

It'd be painful if he didn't have a prince-like face, but fortunately for him he had a very cute one. Ah, my mental endurance.

“Is that so..... I thought it was easier to call him Sam.”

Kouki-kun made a disappointed face.

I guess for Kouki-kun, who's half-foreign and would associate plenty with foreigners, it's alright, but for a purely Japanese person it's hard.

“I don't mind either way..... but it's better if Yuzu-chan decides.”

In the end, the person himself decided it with a single line.

..... he was okay with this. It's good that the person himself was okay with it.

Later, though, when I thought about it, I used to call Kouki-kun [Prince-sama] for his princely looks, my stomach became somewhat sore.

In this fashion, I transferred myself away from the “commoner's group” that I used to belong to, to the group where Kouki-kun and the rest belonged to with Ouji-kun, as a set.

My peaceful life seems to be fading.....

I wonder if I would cause my father problems if my strange ‘power’ got exposed to this group.

* * *

The meat processing company [Niku's Ham] had its own dedicated ranches and factories nationwide, and employed about 8000 employees and had sales exceeding 200 billion yen a year.

At Niku's Ham, they didn't process everything in-house, but they had ties with small and medium enterprises and factories to develop new products and expand their sales channels from their earlier days.

Although they were affiliated with hundreds of companies, the companies that they kept close were just a handful that had had relationships since the previous generation.

So, because that sort of company tended to get involved in new products that were especially important, even if it was a small company, it was necessary for them to have a proper relationship.

The first-born son of the Niku family was Handsome. His name was given to him by his parents who were overly tense about their first child since they were old.

The entire family had ‘full’ figures, and in a sense it was the occupational hazard of eating too much meat, but since they were older, nobody could stop them. In a way, it could be called the darkness of the meat industry.

However, the person himself didn't mind the name at all due to his own personality.

My mother's friend had a child called "Excalibur"-kun, so perhaps maybe he was biased.

By the way, his sister was originally called Venus, but when she was being delivered and they told the government office staff, they had to be persuaded that they were still sane. In the end, she was delivered as "Minako" and like that, further problems were averted.

Handsome got his gentle and docile character from his equally gentle and docile surroundings.

Because of his physique, he was made fun of by children of the same age, and although they thought that he was gentle due to his size, the root cause was his stress.

The Niku family members do not have a very long lifespan.

It was really just the simple fact that they were overweight due to overeating meat, but Handsome thought that it was the "curse" from the animals that became the meat and imagined it as such, causing him to stress and making him overeat more.

And thus, Beautiful Prince had few friends. Because he got stressed over being teased, in the end he ended up only associating with those who were connected to his family, like Kouki's Kuon family.

Among them there was Yuzu, the daughter of director Togaki, who had partnered with them long ago. Yuzu had an easygoing character, and when he was by her side, Handsome felt his heart calm down.

However, she gradually drifted away from Prince.

Yuzu, who had been living the life and having the education of an ordinary household despite being in an upper-class family, couldn't keep up with the education of the Takamine school and began to play with only the children of ordinary families.

One day, he'd heard from his father that Yuzu had had a high fever and that her memories were muddled.

Handsome's father and Yuzu's father were schoolboy friends, and when

Handsome was born, it was as if it was Yuzu's father's joy too.

Her memory is messed up..... He didn't know how bad it was, or if she would keep a greater distance from him.

A few days later, when Yuzu returned to the kindergarten, she was definitely the Yuzu he knew, but her atmosphere had changed somewhat.

When Beautiful Prince saw Yuzu, he felt his heart beating as if he had been enchanted by a fairy-tale wizard.

As he looked around, most of the children were blushing and couldn't make themselves get close to her, so Handsome greeted Yuzu.

Yuzu seemed to have changed a little, but it was the Yuzu that Beautiful Prince knew, and she had a soothing and carefree atmosphere about her.

The Yuzu who had previously distanced herself from him took his hands now, and taught him the splendor of the outside world that he had never noticed before.

As it was..... if she was beside him, then he wouldn't be scared of anything anymore.

"I wish that tomorrow morning would come quickly. I want Yuzu-chan to play with me again."

Seeing that their son's appearance had improved and become better recently, his sizable parents were pleased, and the two of them faced each other, nodding slowly as they smiled.

Chapter 5: Summer Vacation, Part 1

When was the first time that the [Existence] had appeared?

It was during the Westernization movement during the Meiji Restoration. As the Japanese culture and entertainment changed rapidly and the Japanese people's consciousness changed, it was born into this world.

As first, it was small and powerless.

However, that changed in the 1950s. When Japan's economy began to rapidly evolve after the recovery of the post-war period, the [Existence] began to gain [Power] as well.

As its power grew, people began to notice it.

Although it might have been a coincidence that he found it, one of the people who noticed it talked to a politician about it, and the politician, who was rushing to raise the status of Japan, heard that it was in the big cave in underground Tokyo, and found the [Existence].

For those who had a true wish, it had great [Power] to give.

The old military scientists and the exorcists who located it were asked to investigate it.

There was a wish. But it didn't wake up. Its discovery was reported to powerful conglomerates and politicians, and they investigated the use of that [Power].

A few years later, in cooperation with the religious groups that had protected the country for a long time, they were able to prove that some little girls were compatible with it in both existence and will, and by installing the girls as [Shrine Maidens], it would be possible to utilize the power.

And so, Japan began to grow.

They did not know whether it was due to the power of this [Existence]. However, by raising their national strength and attracting attention from other countries, the foundation of Tokyo became the center of the new culture, and

the [Existence] felt its power grow even further.

And now in modern times..... it awoke...

In fear of a single [Young Girl] that had come from a different world, far away.....

* * *

It's summer now. It came so abruptly. It was around spring that "I" became me now, so in the autumn I'll be six years old.

I received an invitation to go to their Switzerland ranch from Ouji-kun, but I'm had to decline. Our household is not the type to go to Switzerland during the summer break.

Still, it's really a good thing that he ended up not being Sam 'hah!.' If it's Ouji-kun, it doesn't shave my mental endurance as much.

The full name makes my soul hurt, while just Sam makes my heart cold... It's not a pun.

(TL note: 'cold' is read 'samui', while 'sam' is read 'samu', hence the pun.)

I kept pulling Ouji-kun around by the hand, so he got a little skinnier.

It's also in big part because he's been refraining from those amazing "snacks". If I hadn't stopped him from taking them every time, he would have been taking in well over 2000 Calories every single day just being in kindergarten.

It was unexpectedly easy to stop him. When I felt uncomfortable with it, I would take his hand, and then he would conveniently forget to eat it with a smile.

I wonder if he thought of me as a friend.

The goal for the future is to make him thin enough so that it wouldn't be awkward to call him [Ouji-kun]. (TL Reminder: Prince)

As expected, after three months my muddled memory has settled down a lot.

There were a lot of memories that I still couldn't remember, but I think that that's because the memories of these three months have overwritten it.

Well, nevertheless, I'm still not very child-like.....

Ahh, come to mention it, my ban on going outside got extended further.

No, of course it's okay for me to go to kindergarten, but it wasn't okay for me to take up piano lessons. It surprised me to discover that I could actually play the piano.

It was as if I had been doing it for years..... or should I say that I had a fragmented memory within me that remembered myself playing it normally in a castle.

However, the position of the keys and such were slightly different..... Why was that?

Ah, so, the reason why I've been prohibited from going out again is because I've had two traffic accidents in three months, and encountered a street slasher once.

...What're the odds of that? Since we were able to avoid most of it in advance, it's great, but all of them involved someone who had lost their sanity.

Erm, just like that truck driver.

..... I think I'm being targeted...

By 'someone'... somewhere.

For that reason, even I judged that it was better for me not to go out to places where there were a lot of people.

In the end it's just being careful, but it's quite fine.

Due to that, I have no free time at all. Since I only played with either Kouki-kun or Niku-kun, and both of them had lessons on their own, I couldn't play with them every day.

I have no girlfriends whatsoever. The girls in that group refuse to talk to me, the only one who can speak normally to Kouki-kun. Even as kids, women are scary.

Mentally, it's easier to play with people around Kotone-chan's age, and mentally I'm comfortable with that age, but I feel like a cat. A cat toddler.

"Hmm?"

While putting away the picture book in my room and looking out the window idly by chance, I saw something red on the hill behind the house.

I wonder what that is..... or should I say, what is that? I feel like I have some idea.

A memory of “mine” came forth, that wasn’t the memory of my five-year-old self, but rather from that fragmented jumble.

It might be the tori gates of a shrine. I certainly remember worshipping at it; I think it was something like a Kitsune-sama or an earth spirit.

I didn’t think about it at all, even for a moment..... I want to go there and play.

Isn’t a place like a quiet shrine where the light of sunbeams leaks through the leaves just attractive?

And for that reason,

“Ooba-onii-chan, can we go to the shrine behind our house.”

“Ooh, let’s go, there are cicadas. Your Onii-chan is really good at catching them.”

As I asked my older brother who’d just gotten home, I got a favorable reply immediately.

I’ve been saved, since onii-chan doesn’t seem to wonder why I would like to go to a shrine or why I even know that that shrine exists.

Also, I don’t need cicadas.

I got permission to go to the shrine with Ooba-onii-chan. Yahooo~!

Incidentally, onii-chan is wearing a straw hat and a towel around his neck. Why are you so serious about catching the cicadas.....?

I was also wearing a white wide-brimmed hat and had an insect net, but I don’t want to catch cicadas. As we got off the road and drew near, he suddenly began to skip and jump while singing. It’s pretty traumatic.

“Yuzu, the stone steps are steep, are you alright? Do you need onii-chan to carry you on his back?”

“..... I’ll climb it myself.”

I think it’s about 50 steps, but it’s hard for a kid. Also, if I fell, I’d die.

“Mmm”

“What’s the matter?”

“Nothing.”

The moment I tried to climb, I felt something like static electricity.

What was that? The rope wrapped around the huge tree broke, but that’s got nothing to do with me, right?

Well, it’s better to not give mind to that. I’m just an ordinary person, after all.

Still, these stone steps are pretty tough.

Even though it’s like a normal staircase, with its staggered height and tread, kids like me with narrow strides would tire themselves out much more than usual.

But once I overcome it, I can relax in a quiet environment.

“Miii~n, Min-min” “Gyahahaha” “Let’s go over there!” “Miii~n, Miii~n”
“Something came down!” “Is that a rhinoceros beetle?” “Mii~n, minmin,
Miii~n” “eeh~n”

“.....”

Arriving at the shrine was nice, but it wasn’t that quiet.

The students from the nearby elementary school were catching cicadas frenziedly.Did all boys feel like that.....? And there were a lot of people who came to visit the shrine as well.

“.....It’s different from what I expected.”

I wanted to kill time in something like a quiet forest shrine, but I think this place is noisier than normal.

Because I got tired climbing the stone steps, after washing my hands ceremonially and making my visit, I sat down in the shrine grounds and stared at the sky idly.

I could hear the noisy sounds of children..... The sound of loud cicadas.
Have they been exterminated?

Baaan~ Baaaaaaan~

“.....eh?”

When I turned my head to the source of the sound of hands being clapped in prayer, a grandma I didn’t know was offering a pack of Mitarashi Dango in front of me and worshipping.

“.....erm, wai-...”

As soon as I called out to her, the grandma headed off elsewhere. There were also some Daifuku and rice crackers when I looked closely, along with a 5-yen coin on top of it all.

“.....”

Why didn’t she say anything to me? Who are you looking to tie the knot with, obaa-chan?

It might be better for me to go home before another insanity encounter happens.....

“Heey, Onii-chan...”

When I turned around, Ooba-onii-chan was there giving the elementary school students a lecture on cicadas.....

I wonder if there’s any way to kill time.....

“.....ah”

There was a black cat behind the stone steps leading to the shrine that looked very unconcerned.

A really dark cat that had no other colors mixed in its fur.....

And its silver eyes looked straight at me.....

“.....Yuzu!”

Before I noticed, I had been hugged by my onii-chan, and brought down the stone steps.

“What are you doing, Yuzu, you could have fallen!”

“.....aa, ... uhnn, I’m sorry.”

“.....Are you feeling unwell? Let’s go home. I’ll bring you out here again when you want to come back...”

“.....yes”

Onii-chan gently stroked my head, and stopped scolding me as I lost my vigor.

.....I , what was I doing?

Chapter 6: Summer Vacation, Part 2

I've been quite free during summer vacation, but recently my relationship with Kotone-chan has deteriorated.

Kotone-chan is in her third year in junior high. Because the entrance examinations are imminent, she's been going to the library to do summer revision. Come to think of it, since it's an affiliated school, there isn't actually an examination.

Kotone-chan, won't you spare some time for your little sister? Where are you going?

Both father and mother were busy as usual, and when I thought of going to the O-bon festival, it seems that grandfather lost grandmother only a year ago, and he didn't want the noisiness of a gathering around him.

"Because of that, Onii-chan, let's go."

"Where did that come from?"

It can't be helped since only Ooba-onii-chan was free. It'll be a terrible thing if Kotone-chan had been caught by some bad guy, so we have to investigate.

It is definitely not because I have nothing to do with my free time.

"Oh, Ooh, that's right."

Ooba-onii-chan understood his younger sister's thoughts at once.

Kotone-chan, I'm worried about you..... It would be good if she could make new normal friends, but because I have deep love for Kotone-chan, I'm worried that she might be picked up by some middle-aged man old enough to have children.

".....That's unexpectedly harsh."

Oops, it seems my voice leaked out. Onii-chan's face was a little bit cramped.

The next day, Ooba-onii-chan came back at a dash after his summer revision course... even though he was picked up by the car to come home, so, in addition, the driver got dragged into it as we went forth in pursuit of Kotone-

chan.

According to the driver's testimony, she had gone out to shop with some friends, and it seems that she's been visiting a shopping district some distance away.

"I'm getting a bit nervous about this..."

There isn't some powerful enemy, right?

That aside, onii-chan, don't you usually call yourself differently? (TL note: he uses 'ore', which is a more masculine tone, instead of 'boku', the more polite one, that he usually uses.) It seems that Ooba-onii-chan wants to puff himself up in front of his cute little sister.

"Ah, it's Kotone."

"Ehh, where?"

"There, behind that bookstore."

Looking out the window from inside the car, I saw the Takamine school uniform that I recognized in that distant place.

It's certainly Kotone-chan. But she's alone. What's that? She came here to buy a book normally? But it's a big shopping district, and buying stuff here feels a bit lonely. If she just went to the station she'd be able to buy books from the many big bookstores nearby.

As the driver drove slowly behind her, we got honked at by a car behind us on our way, and Kotone-chan eventually entered one particular ramen shop.

".....is she hungry?"

"She's eating!?"

Come to think of it, Kotone-chan has been strangely glossy recently, is it because of oily food? I felt so.

"Nonono, wait, Yuzu. I heard recently that there's been rumors going around that our family's company is going into the noodle business."

"ehhh~... Well, why is only Kotone-onee-chan having ramen?"

"....."

Saying that Kotone-chan is helping father while keeping it a secret... is a bit far-fetched. There's no point in keeping it secret from onii-chan and I.

I can't help but think that way in the car, so we decided to head into that ramen place. Sneaking in from the outside..... is it impossible?

"Then I will take a look at the shop from behind the store."

".....Eh, but even if we don't,"

Not long after I quietly stepped forth, I got halted. This isn't a game, okay? Aren't you concerned about Kotone-chan? Say so, Onii-sama.

".....why?"

A five year old girl was left alone in front of the ramen shop in the shopping district. It's dangerous.

But I'm not alone. A little girl holding a rubber ball was staring at me while peeking out at me from the side street beside the shop.

Even if I say that she's little, but she's about the same as me. A cute girl with hair like a kokeshi doll, and when I saw her and smiled, and she started in place, frozen as I approached her.

"Hey... are you a Princess?"

It's the first time I've heard that.wait, is it the first time? And it seems that for the time being she's not scared of my doll-like appearance.

"No, it's different. You're cute too....."

She looked like a kokeshi doll. I suddenly noticed it as I continued... I felt that this child was somewhat similar to Kotone-chan and I.

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing~. I'm called Yuzu. What's your name?"

"I'm, Misa."

I played with this pretty kokeshi doll called Misa until onii-chan returned. Since we were both awkward, we didn't end up playing with the rubber ball.

Err..... How do you write circles on the road and play? As I picked up a pebble

and drew a circle on the path, Misa also began to draw and write and play.

“What’s that?”

“Errrmh..... ramen.”

“Do you like ramen?”

“Yes, and when I grow up I’ll run a ramen shop!”

“Ah... Perhaps this one,”

“Yuzu!”

When I raised my head to look at the sudden interruption, I saw Kotone-chan who had a slightly angry expression on her face. Behind her was Ooba-onii-chan who was drooping his head like a chastised child, and a tall man.

It’s an approximately 30-year old uncle, I guess? A little bit of a dandy uncle would be better, but maybe this person is with Kotone-chan?

“Ah, you’re done with your work?”

Misa walked over with a pleasant smile on her face as she looked at the uncle. This person is...

“Misa’s ‘Father’!?”

“I’m still only 20!”

Haha, it was only a joke.

*

“.....I see”

I listened to their story. It seems that he was one of the wait staff in the ramen shop, who is blood-related with Misa, but he’s not her father, but, rather, her older brother... They do look alike.

“Hey, Yuzu, did you come here with onii-chan.....”

“I’m sorry... But why are you in this ramen shop?”

Since we were standing outside, we moved into the store to continue speaking, since the store was pretty vacant past lunchtime.

By the way, Ooba-onii-chan was seated on the floor because he'd bothered the store by going round the back.

".....Ah, erm...yeah... You know, Yuzu. Misa-chan and he are our cousins. That's why I came to see how they were doing...okay?"

Kotone-chan's cheeks were a little flushed while she glanced at him.

.....Fuu~hn? I was still a toddler, so my words were still lispy, but putting it all together, it seems that their parents passed away early. Since their parents used to work with my father, they couldn't rely on their relatives. When their parents got into trouble, he distanced themselves from them.

He seems to be living with young Misa alone while working at this ramen shop.

..... Praise me for deciphering it this far.

"It's fine, I love ramen."

"That's right! Onii-chan's ramen is delicious!"

"It's very thick, and everyone is eating my "ramen", but, I don't ask children to pay."

A true Tokyoite!?

ehh? Why is Kotone-chan looking at him with enraptured eyes.....? I am still a child, so I can't understand.

Besides, isn't it good just to eat it at your own convenience? Looking at the person who seems to be the shop owner, the tottering grandpa nodded with a gentle smile.

"I haven't had a meal..."

"....."

I'm not being dumb, right!?

"Hey, here's your ramen."

While observing the grandpa in front of us the 'ramen' was served.

It seems that the ramen he makes is 'ramen'. It's a very subtle difference.

Somehow I can understand it with my soul, but I can't put it into words.

In front of Misa and I was ramen and a small donburi for children. About two servings per person.

It's especially precious, so Misa and I sat side-by-side and ate at the counter.

Foreigners who come to Japan misunderstand, but eating Japanese noodles with slurping is neither well-mannered nor a custom. A dish that a chef cooks with spirit will go stale without the 'spirit' of the eater that it gets.

But my infant tongue is picky so I can't eat it all at once.What do I do?

Somehow when I looked at Kotone-chan, she had a different bowl from ours, and ours was full of toppings like naruto fish cake, and seaweed.

They've thought properly about the nutritional value for children too... such a nice person.

While watching the seaweed that was moving under the convection current in the hot soup, suddenly the seaweed raised its "body" and one hand.

[Yoo, I, am not a bad wakame]..... or something like [Leave this to me eat up]?

After a while of the wakame seaweed wiggling, it sank into the ramen soup like it was drowning, and the auditory hallucinations of its last moments were left in my ear.

"....."

Beside me, Misa was opening her mouth with a *pokan* expression while alternately looking at the donburi in front of her and me. Unfortunately, it doesn't seem to be a hallucination.

And as I tried eating the cooled ramen... ooooh? There was a "taste"!

"Dad, this is delicious!"

"I'm not Misa's father!"

..... But you haven't told me your name.

I don't understand why, but it seems that I can still taste delicious things. In fact, the sweets that were given to me at the shrine had its proper taste.

The strange “power” hasn’t appeared since I was at the park, so I guess it seems that I’m an abnormal person.

Chapter 7: I became an elementary schooler, Part 1

The days passed by quickly and I suddenly found myself an elementary school student.

I also had my sixth birthday along the way, but it wasn't anything particularly interesting.

Every year Father would buy me a stuffed bear from a famous brand, Mother bought me several picture books from overseas, and Kotone-chan and Ooba-onii-chan got me pretty hair decorations and sweets.

Also, from Ouji-kun for my birthday, I got a pig of the American Duroc variety. The Duroc is a very fine pig with lots of marbling in its flesh.

"[Buuhi?]"

Its round eyes were also unbelievably cute.

"Father, please send it to a meat processing plant."

".....Yuzu."

Even if he looks at me with that sort of eyes, there's no reason for me to keep a pig which is over 300 kilos as a pet.

There were no problems with the elementary school entrance ceremony... huh? I wonder why that came to mind. I felt like there were problems with my entrance ceremony in the past... but maybe I'm just dreaming it.

Kotone-chan also entered high school safely, and Ooba-onii-chan entered senior year in high school. This time around, it's onii-chan who's the one that's got a major exam. He's taking an external exam.

So it's Kotone-chan and Misa's dad..... is that wrong? It's her onii-chan, well, that's inconsequential. Her dad is quite a good person.

Since it was a junior high school student who had first told him that they were relatives, the dad didn't really trust her, but Misa took to Kotone-chan, and as Kotone-chan became a high-school student, she became very beautiful.

.....Is she into good-for-nothing men?

They divided us into classes in elementary school, but I was placed in the same class as Ouji-kun and Kouki-kun.

... Was this really a division of classes?

Still, thinking about it properly, this classification was pretty natural.

Because Takamine School has a middle school and high school section, there seem to be many parents who think that paying a high tuition fee for elementary school is better than paying for cram schools and private tutors, and from kindergarten and elementary school, good children from good families commuted to the school, for the sake of their parents who wanted the brand of [Takamine].

That's why there are only 4 classes per grade in the elementary school that's attached to Takamine.

And since there was only one class of children who were better educated than the average, they would be with each other for all six years as long as they didn't cause any problems.

..... I guess it must have failed.

If I had my original abilities, wouldn't I have been in the remaining three classes?

"Yuzu-chan, what's wrong?"

".....I feel like I've made a mistake in my life choices."

"Yuzu-chan, you say some very difficult things."

It was Ouji-kun (provisional) who was talking to me.

As a result of my hard work over the past year, Ouji-kun's size has been reduced by about 20%. Thanks to that, Ouji-kun is now a [somewhat chubby but still cute little boy].

I even saw some of the girls in the class talking to Ouji-kun, but Ouji-kun still comes to me for some reason.

Because bringing ice boxes was prohibited when we entered elementary

school, I wonder if I wouldn't have to stay by his side..... thinking about it, because I buy things from shops and vending machines every time I stop, we ended up spending time together a lot after all.

During that time, it seems that he I've best friends with Ouji-kun, and the head contestant for [Oji-sama], Kouki-kun.

At the same time, Kouki-kun seems to be rather bad at conversation with the young girls in class, as his intelligence is already well past elementary school. As a result, the very un-elementary schooler-like conversations he had with me increased, and the girls in the class got jealous, so I have no girlfriends.

"Life is cruel."

"Yuzu-chan, you say some very difficult things....."

But the gods have not yet forsaken me... Every time I speak about gods, it feels like there's a tiny earthquake, but if I spent time thinking about it, I'd lose.

"Yuzu-san.There's something I want to speak to you about."

There was a girl speaking to me.

Is it this pattern again? And why is this child staring at me? It's pretty impressive, since she's such a beautiful girl.

.....Ehh? Do you hate me after all, God?

Still, Kouki-kun was beautiful like that, but as a first-grader in elementary school I felt that words like 'cute' were more appropriate than the word "beautiful" for an impression. Indeed, the bloodlines of high society are amazing.

"Could I hear your reply?"

".....ah, it's okay."

By the way, I'm in the girls' toilet. Not even Ouji-kun could stick with me this far. As this girl called out, I was surrounded by several girls... or that's what I thought would happen, but this girl was alone.

"Is it not okay to speak here?"

"It's a bit... in a place like this....."

Well, that's right. It's a pretty restroom, but I don't know if anyone will come.

That girl and I..... Shijiyyuin Kako-san will meet in the rearing shed nearby after school.

By the way, it's not read Hanako, but Kako-chan. (Note: these two are written the same in Japanese.) It's misleading.

I was wondering what the rearing shed was, and Kako was one of the keepers. something unexpected?

For now, I have a children's use mobile phone, so I let the driver-san know. I don't know what she wants to say, but I only have Misa as a girlfriend around my age, so even in such a situation, I'm rather excited.

“.....”

I arrived at the rearing shed, which was a concrete building with cages like in a zoo.

I guess it's because this is a rich school that they can spend money on such a place.

Well, it doesn't matter. What I was concerned about was the “brazier” which was located just a little way away from the rabbits and the cages containing pheasants and chickens.

Yeah..... Someone clearly forgot to put it back in storage after using and left it here. That's must be it.

“Ah, Yuzu-san, you've come.”

“.....Kako-san?”

Since she called me by name, I called her by name as well, but she had a slightly surprised look on her face that told me that she wasn't used to being called that by her friends.

Did I come too soon?

For a moment, I gave her space, since she was carrying a bucket full of bait while wearing a jersey. A diligent one, her.

“Are you feeding them? Should I wait?”

“Would you mind waiting a little?”

After looking at her troubled face, Kako broke off after that one line and began feeding the rabbits.

I was free while waiting, so I helped out with the bait, and the rabbits and chickens ate greedily.

“The students of this school don’t take animals seriously.....”

“Heeh.....”

At one point, as part of the school’s cultivation of our aesthetic sensibility, they had the students take care of animals. The students of this school, because there were many boys and girls with great egos, even if they kept pets, would only pet them, and it seems that they wouldn’t even feed them properly.

“In addition, recently, there have been cases where animals disappear..... about one every few weeks.”

“.....Is that so?”

For some reason I glanced towards that charcoal brazier.It can’t be.

This school is scary.

“Thank you for your help.now, as to what I wanted to say”

“Yes?”

“What kind of relationship do you have with Kuon Kouki-san?”

Kako’s eyes, which had been calm until then, were suddenly glaring at me.

Come to think of it, Kouki-kun was the son of the Kuon family. This place spawned a great number of politicians, and I wonder if we know it. My father told me too I shouldn’t be rude to Kouki-kun.

His grandfather had been a member of the Diet, but resigned after it emerged in a weekly magazine that he had been given bribes a few years ago.

For that reason, she seems to be in a bad mood now, so it seems better to not get involved.

Still, he’s a person of some status, so I can’t ignore it.

Surely the Shijiyyuin family, should be of approximately the same pedigree as the Kuon family. This flow is possibly...

“Kako-san, are you engaged to Kouki-kun.....?”

“!!”

When I asked if there was such an “engagement,” Kako’s face turned red as if it had been boiled in a flash.

Did I hit the mark? Moreover, it seems to be more than just that the house decided, but also that she herself was in love with him.

“Wh-what do you mean! I don’t look at him that way”

Looking at her with warm eyes, Kako’s face became redder and redder and she hid her face with her hands.

Whoops, I accidentally let my expression out. I’m quite the middle-aged man, if I do say so myself.

“I only know Kouki-kun from kindergarten. Hmm... because he’s Handsome-kun’s friend and so am I, we’ve had many chances to talk.”

In short, it seems that Kako became jealous because her fiancée is talking to girls other than herself.

“.....But, he doesn’t talk to other girls, only Yuzu-san.”

“It seems like he doesn’t talk to the others because they’re too immature. I, personally, am not a very childlike person either. But, if Kako-san can speak so properly, won’t Kouki-kun talk to you normally as well?”

“Bu-but, the saying goes that a woman should walk three steps behind a man, I, as a lady, have always stayed 30 steps behind Kouki-san.....”

“.....”

This girl, she seems so intelligent, but she’s such an idiot!

＊

“Th-that’s right.....?”

“That’s right.”

After that, I asked Kako to be my friend, and explained how to interact with Kouki-kun to her. It was rough trying to explain how to get along with him, and when I looked up, the sky had turned red.

..... my mind had gotten fatigued after so long. But it was good that she understood.

“..... then I’ll accompany you to the school gate.”

“Yes..... Yuzu-san, is it alright if I continue to consult with you in the future?”

“Yeah, it’s alright.”

Oh? Isn’t this the sign that we’re friends now? With this, Ouji-kun and Kouki-kun should no longer be waiting for me outside of the girls’ toilet.

“In the first place, Yuzu-san was good friends with Nikuno-kun, so you’d never look at other men.”

“.....eh?”

Unless... are we being looked upon that way.....?

I walked with Kako to the school gate, holding some feelings that I didn’t understand. To be emotionally attached to Ouji-kun... I hadn’t calculated that there would be such a rumor.

As I was internally about 20 years old, I felt as if I was pampering and fawning over him like a dandy uncle.....

Because of the time, there were no other students on our way from the rearing shed to the school gate.

Although it feels a little dangerous, both Kako and I are calling up our cars to the school gate so we won’t be in any danger.

..... For some reason, I feel like I’m raising a flag for myself.

“[UHYAHYAHYAHYAHYAHYAHYAH!]”

“Look out! Here it comes!”

A rapid reaction, kami-sama!

That strange sound that came from a little distance away from us was a young

man that was wearing the pants of what looked like what high schoolers wore nowadays.

Oh, my eyes got drawn to it.

“..... wh-what is it?”

It was the first time Kako had seen such a person, and she was scared stiff.

While whirling about an iron pipe, he was saying various things like [This school], or [This me], *etc.*

“.....It’s a Takamine dropout, isn’t it”

tremble..... He turned his bloodshot eyes towards me as I casually leaked out those words.

“I’m NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOTTTTTTTT!”

What a bother.

If you came here for such a reason, please go to the high school division, and not the elementary school one.

Ah, but that’s no good. Kotone-chan and Ooba-onii-chan are there.

The high school student approached us while brandishing the iron pipe.

He’s faster than I thought. As his muscles screamed, the blood vessels on his face popped out.

Nevertheless... I wasn’t afraid.

The [Power] that I hadn’t felt since the park a year ago came from my deep..... “dark” part.

Protecting the terrified Kako behind me, I gazed into his eyes.

“Heeeee...!?”

The movement of the high school student stopped for a moment. In that time,

“Urrryaaaaaaa!!!”

Someone called out at the same time and struck the back of the high school student.

When I looked in the direction of the striker, there was a male senior who had thrown it, a used brazier which I remembered.

When the high school student collapsed, the teachers and security who finally noticed the noise rushed in and detained the high schooler.

..... I didn't get my turn.

Protected by the teacher, we waited on the sofa in the school infirmary until our drivers came to pick us up. Kako, who was still in shock and fright, held my hands tightly.

“..... Thank you..... for protecting me. U-uhm, may I call you Yuzu-sama.....?”

With her flushed cheeks..... and wet eyes, Kako thanked me as she looked directly at me.....

Ehh? Did I accidentally raise a strange flag?

Chapter 8: I became an Elementary Schooler, Part 2

I often play outside with Misa, who goes to a public elementary school, but at school I stay more with Kako, and a Kako who got more opportunities to speak with Kouki-kun was a happy Kako.

Still, this child, who talks to me often regarding Kouki-kun, is a bit of a problem, I think.

Speaking of problems, there's several.

One thing is Misa. It's that "Dad" thing.

It's not because of the relationship with Kotone-chan. The thing about Kotone going over to the dad's place, it seems like Father doesn't make much comment, but the problem is that at the shopping street where the ramen shop where the dad works is, it seems that the number of the shops rolling up their shutters has increased.

The dad doesn't say anything to Misa or me, but when I was playing with Misa, I overheard the name of "Kuon".

.....Just to make sure, he did resign from the Diet under the allegations of taking bribes, right? Kouki-kun's grandfather.

There's nothing we can do as children, but it's a little lonely that we haven't seen many children other than ourselves in the shopping area.

The other problem isn't really a problem, but the atmosphere of the class has changed quite a bit.

As a result of that "ruffian" entering the school, the deficiencies in the school's security were exposed and the gate was permanently closed, and the security guards patrolled about outside the fence.

Why is that a problem? Although you might think it wouldn't be, it was a really big deal since they thought that it was me who had repelled that "ruffian".

How could a first-grade elementary schooler do such a thing.....?

Virtually all of the upper-graders didn't believe it, but the first-and-second-graders thought 'No way!', and stopped approaching me.

Ah, that's right. If I think about it, it's just keeping the status quo.

It seems that people will continue to be scared by me.

"That's right, at that time, Yuzu-sama caught me when I was scared of that evil ruffian..."

It's because of you, Kako.

Also, I began to feel stares from one of the boys in the class.

That child is also a celebrity in a way. He was the child of a normal family, but his grades were excellent and he was in our class. Not to underestimate an elementary schooler's grades, but he'd mastered English, German, and Chinese, and even in sixth-graders' tests, he scored nearly full marks.

As a consequence he's been cut off from the rest of the class, but he doesn't seem to mind.

..... how adult-like.

His name was Shijima Yuuki-kun. He first looked at me after I got a lot of attention thanks to that incident, but when I first felt his gaze, I was really surprised.

It's the dawn of my popular life!Totally not.

That look wasn't that of a boy looking at a girl. He was looking at me with a certain amount of vigilance.

..... It's become rather troublesome around here.

*

Today, I headed towards the animal house as usual.

It's not that I'm one of the keepers, but from all the times I went to the animal house because I was accompanying Kako, I got attached to the animals. And while Kako was busy with her training, I would feed them.

Since then, there haven't been any more of those mysterious disappearances of the animals. It can't be because of that brazier being broken from that time.....?

It's scary when I think about it.

".....?"

As I walked down my usual path, I heard a short shout from the back of the pet house.

The students who were assigned to raise things in this school were still as unserious as ever, and were hardly ever seen.

So who would be there..... when I peeked behind the shed, there was a boy who was taking a stance like in Kenpo.

..... Who's that?

He slowly released his stance and thrust his hand forward.

"Hah...!"

He raised his voice spiritedly, and the empty can about a meter in front of him rattled.

"...Woah..."

"Who's there!"

The boy spun around and took a pose as I unexpectedly spoke out.

..... Who is it? Well, because it's a school, anyone involved would be from the school.

"Hello."

".....you,"

Seeing me walking out unconcerned and very normally, his eyes widened a little.

It was an upperclassman boy who had a somewhat wild feeling about him. The good uniforms that were painstakingly tailored had been lightly crumpled and wrinkled by him. It feels like I've seen him somewhere.

“Oh yeah, you’re from that time when you beat up that strange high school student.”

“Aah~”

Finally, I remembered. At that time, he was the boy who threw the brazier.

Because I wanted to thank him at least once, I searched for him with both Kako and my parents, but as soon as he left, I couldn’t recognize him.

“Yo, did you get hurt at that time?”

“No. Thank you for that.”

He’s unexpectedly candid..... or rather, he has the feel of an ordinary boy. The boys in my class are stranger.

“Well, it’s natural for me to protect women as an ally of justice.”

I properly thanked him, and he said such a thing while looking shy.

“Uwaah, amazing~.”

While being praised I didn’t forget myself.

“I am Kaijima Onzada, a fourth year. Which year are you in?”

“I am Toukaki Yuzu, a first year.”

For now, a self-introduction is important.

“So what was the ‘Ally of Justice’ Onzada-san doing?”

“.....I feel like something’s being implied by your words. Also, since I am three years your senior, you should call me ‘Onzada-senpai.’”

“It’s not you, it’s Yuzu.”

“.....Yuzu. Is that alright?”

“So Onzada-kun, what was *that* that you threw out?”

“You, did you see it?”

I didn’t notice that I changed the subject, but Onzada-kun raised a pitiful voice.

“Something” had flown out of his hand. It was a disease that troubled 14 year

olds, and he was throwing pebbles and nails.

“Ah,..... ehm, that’s right, I threw a shuriken.”

“Heeh..... then where is it?”

“.....Don’t tell anyone.”

Onzada-kun looked around and brought his face close to my ear.

“That was because I threw it with “ki”.”

The answer fell far into the “disease” category, it would normally seem like it was too late for him, but I was satisfied with the answer.

At that time, something that was accumulating in Onzada-kun’s body was shot out through the palm of his hand, and it ‘shot out’ something. I don’t know if that’s the ‘ki’ that Onzada-kun is talking about, but the answer seems to be most appropriate.

If I hadn’t seen it, I might have thought that it was a shuriken.

“Is that something like..... a fighting game?”

I only have knowledge of that degree.

“It’s something like that..... but the real thing is much more amazing. You can attack things like ghosts, too.”

“Ghosts..... Onzada-kun can do those kinds of things, huh. Amazing.”

“Ooh, it’s because I was born in a temple.”

“Oh~~~”

Onzada-kun was a temple child. Indeed, I thought that his name was strange. To enter Takamine school, is he the child of some great shrine keepers?

And although I thought that it was impressive, did all ordinary monks have ‘ki’ or fly?

If all of the people in the world could do such things, then wouldn’t there be more people applying to work in the shrines?

I don’t know the circumstances of the shrines, but I don’t care, either.

“Onzada-kun, I want to try too.”

“.....Haah?”

At my sudden words, Onzada-kun had a half-astonished-half-uncertain expression on his face.

“I’m not sure that the little childlike Yuzu can do it. It took a while before I could even rattle the can. It’s not child’s play, you know.”

Since when were you an adult, Onzada-kun...

“Give me a chance. Teach me, Onzada-kun. I’ll do it seriously.”

“.....Well~”

Onzada-kun began to have doubts for a moment.

I was being serious. I wished that I could control my weird [Power] to some extent.

One more push.

“It’s alright, I can keep it a secret from *everyone*.”

“Well, you’ll be struck by your parents if you leak it out, so don’t say it! It’s said at the temple that if you practice too early, you’ll be unable to do it.”

“.....I-I see.”

Onzada-kun seems to have chattered out his weakness to me. It’s a spontaneous kind of digging one’s own grave. What is it again..... it seems like he’s the “gets-carried-away-easily” kind of person.

“Yes, it’ll be a secret between the two of us.”

“Tha-that’s right.”

With one last push tipping him over, Onzada-kun suddenly became nervous and averted his gaze. What is it?

I managed to persuade him with that feeling, and began to learn the technique of the “temple”.

“.....So, so, you suck up the spirit of nature from your soles, and store it under your belly.”

“.....?”

“Imagine circulating the gathered spiritual power inside your body...”

I’m not sure.

I don’t need to collect it from the outside, since there’s that [Power] inside my body, so I can just use that.

Perhaps the quality of the power’s different? Is it not ‘ki’ spiritual energy? If I did it with mental power, I got the feeling that it’d be [Destroyed].....

Gishiiiiii.....

“” ””

When I tried to stick out my hand to release the [Power], there was a sound like rushing air.

..... what was that sound? I wonder if I did something again.....

“.....B-Because it’s tiring if we do a lot all of a sudden, I think it’s better to stop here.”

“Th-that’s right. I should go home soon.”

It concluded like that.

Onzada-kun said he would teach me from now on whenever we meet.

“Well then, I’ll eat something then go home.....”

“Something.....?”

Onzada-kun, took out the *contents* of his sports bag that he’d brought with him.

“ ”

When I saw it, I quietly took my distance from Onzada-kun, and drop-kicked Onzada-kun who had taken out the “brazier”.

“You’re the criminal!”

And when I went home... It’s certainly not my fault that all of the 90 year old zelkova trees in the school yard have suddenly withered and have their leaves fall.....

Chapter 9: I became an Elementary Schooler, Part 3

I have only a few friends, but I'm alright.

In my class, I have Prince-kun, Kako and Kouki-kun, so I don't feel particularly alienated. For my lunch breaks, I've been taking walks with Prince-kun in the schoolyard for the sake of his diet and my physical fitness.

Well, I didn't really want to move, but because Prince-kun didn't want me to remain still, he took my hand and pulled me along forcibly.

.....There've been strange rumors because of that, but I can't stop them at this late hour.

I'm being instructed by Onzada-kun on a regular basis, but I still can't understand 'ki'.

As per usual, after stripping and withering 3 more trees in the schoolyard with my [Power] I've been restraining myself.

I might be in a different grade from Onzada-kun, but he might be the friend I'm the most relaxed with at the moment. This person, regardless of whether he's genuinely good-natured or just pretending, is easy to speak to.

Of course, I tried to convince him properly about that brazier.

"When you train in the mountains, do you always catch rabbits?"

"Although it's hygienic because it's an expensive school, but you have to be careful because it's not meant for food use, you know?"

As the daughter of a food processing company, I can't let something like that slide.

Well, erm..... were there other reasons?

"Then, that girl stopped it with just a kick. And so..... you know..... you, you look weak, so I'll protect you."

"ehh..... uh, thanks?"

It seems that our friendship has grown thanks to this exchange of blows by

the river.....?

Carrying on like that, it turned to autumn, and I turned seven years old.

This year, another wonderful ‘present’ came from Ouji-kun. What a cute Texel lamb this year.

[Baa]

And then, nobody saw the lamb ever again. It’s a light mystery.

Incidentally, although it doesn’t matter, it seems that the meat of the Texel lamb is the finest and has little fat, so it’s great for diets.

Ouji-kun has become much thinner, but he’s still a little chubby compared to other children. Even then, when he gets called [Prince] by Kouki-kun, it gives me less mental damage.

Today, Ouji-kun and Kouki-kun were playing something like soccer in the school yard.

Kako was heroically holding onto a sports towel nearby, but I’m the kind that gets dizzy if I stay too long under the sun, so I went into the shade.

“Hey, you there, come over for a moment.”

“.....?”

The wall that surrounded the academy is about 4 meters tall, and is electrified at the top. Still, it’s not entirely fully enclosed, and the design was such that every few meters, there would be a small portrait-sized latticed window.

When I looked through the nearby window, there was a pretty girl the same age as I was clinging onto the lattice.

“Hey~, you~, come over here for a bit.”

“.....”

Who is this girl.....? She’s cute but her tongue’s sharp. Her face was that of an ordinary Japanese person, but the color of her hair was weak and her eyes were brownish.

“.....You, what’s your school? You’re not from Takamine, are you?”

“I don’t care about that, I’m the [Heroine] of this world!”

My question was answered while she puffed up her chest with pride, even while clinging to the lattice.

“Heroine.....?”

“Well, I don’t expect a mob character like you to understand, but everything that I do takes precedence. Such a thing is good. Hey, would you happen to know *Kuon* Kouki? He’s supposed to be in this school.”

“Kouki-kun?”

A friend of Kouki-kun’s? No, no, I can’t imagine him that way..... he’s a pleasant person and a friend. But I casually turned my eyes towards Kouki-kun, and she seemed to have found Kouki-kun after that.

“Aahh! It’s really Kuon Kouki-kun! He’s really as cool as I imagined. But he’s still young. I’ll, be collecting still images”

“.....ehh”

Oh crap, it’s a stalker? And what on earth..... I heard something strange about that pronunciation of that long “kuon”.

“Who..... are you?”

“What, begone! I am Sakurazaki Matsuri. The suburban genki-girl.”

With a pose that seemed as if she expected a *sparkle* was about to happen, Matsuri closed one eye and stuck out her tongue.
Uwahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh.

“Anyway, who’s that near Kouki-kun? Might it be Handsome-kun?”

“.....*twitch*”

“After all it’s so, but why is he so thin? Although he’s still fat, but has the event already started.....? No, he might still get fat again.....”

Matsuri began to grumble something or another.

But how rude those words were..... Prince-kun has also lost his habit of snacking, so I don’t think he’ll become fat.

After that, Matsuri named several people, but I either didn't know them or their names were subtly different, so I couldn't answer. I have no intention of speaking out about others' personal information.

And I nodded gently at her tales while I quietly pushed the button on the wall.

"Wait, you can't be of use. Well, you've been useful thus far, so if I enter Takamine, I'll take you into my group."

".....I'll consider it."

"Hey, what's that person, wait, it's Kako, what's that villainous woman doing..."

pon

"Missy, what are you doing over there?"

".....eh"

Inside the fence of the school, every several dozen meters, there was a direct communication line to the guards, a [Report Button] had been installed. It was just nice that it was close by.

Just 2 minutes after pressing the button, a security guard was tapping Matsuri lightly on the shoulder.

"I am the heroine of this world" then,

"When I'm done with my plan, I'll bury you" then,

"Hey, say something to these guys, what are you doing!" then

She cried out a lot and was taken elsewhere.

By the way, it was famous amongst some people that the security guards of Takamine were unforgiving to even minors who trespassed, thanks to the example of high school girls.

Oh my~, I got to see something I don't usually get to see often.

By the way, I shot everything that happened properly on my mobile phone.

* * *

Matsuri was born as an only daughter to an ordinary house in the suburbs.

Although her father was occasionally absent at times when she was growing up and her mother worked in the nightlife business, she never had to live in need. Because her neighbors were friendly people, she grew up without ever feeling like she was lonely.

Her steady mother dedicated herself to raising Matsuri alone as a single mother.

Matsuri had the talent to charm and attract men unwittingly, and growing up with her bright and cheerful personality in the suburbs, she was beloved by everyone.

With this kind of upbringing, she would have grown into a 'little devil' that attracted men unconsciously and innocently.

However, when her mother remarried with the president of a start-up company, a *certain event* caused her life to flow in a different direction.

“.....I..... am *Sakurazaki* Matsuri.”

It was a little different from the spelling of the Sakurazaki that was the surname of her new father, but she noticed that her appearance in the mirror looked like the heroine of the Otome game [Layered Love Mille-feuille *Ikemen Paradise*] that she had played many times.

And at that moment she whispered those words, a huge volume of memories rushed back into her, and her little brain couldn't tolerate the load, and when she woke up from her sleep a couple of days later, she was the Matsuri of now.

Matsuri recalled the memories of her previous life. The details were ambiguous, but she was now fully combined with the Matsuri of her previous life.

The Matsuri of her past-life was the student of a school that would enroll any student just because they were lacking in student numbers, and played this game through the night for four days and lost her life because she fell asleep while eating steamed buns.

However, Matsuri delighted that she was born again into this world rather than being in her previous life.

Although she had heard of reincarnation in the world of games, she realized that this was the world of the Otome game [Layered Love Mille-feuille *Ikemen Paradise*].

The story of the game started from the Middle school of Takamine School where the sons of the upper class gathered and their graduation six years from then was the stage.

Here, Matsuri, as the healthy daughter of the suburbs, was going to grow her 'love' with the capture targets.

There were 5 capture targets.

Kuon Kouki.

The grandson of the Kuon family that was both a lawmaker and a celebrity, suffered from his grandfather's involvement in bribing, and when one encountered an event where he went out in the middle of the night with a popularity rating of over 50%, one would hear of his troubles, and would change from friends to the path to lovers.

Nikuno Handsome.

The scion of a well-known meat processing company, he was convinced that he was cursed by the animals which became meat and wouldn't live long, and was stressed and became fat from overeating.

He was troubled by having to slim down when the engagement event happened, and the flag was established by solving his troubles.

Besides this, there was the black-hearted glasses-wearing friend of Kouki in the student council, for which events wouldn't be generated unless their compatibility was 80% or more.

A boy born in a temple that used his mysterious power to solve the problem of Handsome Prince, and his love level wouldn't rise unless Handsome Prince's event progression went past 70%.

A young teacher, who was distressed over his name being "The electric beast of a certain game", solved the problem of Handsome Prince who was also a fellow sufferer, and the compatibility would become negative if one didn't take

part in his intervention.

Evidently, this game was a multiple simultaneous strategy simulation, and the final goal was to make a [Ikemen Paradise Harem] like the title suggested.

In order to avoid the criticisms that such a thing was impossible in reality, the final happy end was a rare relationship without marital relationships which could be called a “carnal paradise”, which even included R-rated content. The game was a phantom game that was discontinued 3 months after release.

From her previous experience playing this game for more than 2000 hours without studying, she knew what was essential for the initial capture of Kouki and Handsome Prince.

Finding out at last about the Takamine School that was slightly different in setting and name from the game, Matsuri wondered if there were other differences since the game became a reality, and unable to wait until she entered secondary school, she forced her new father to move her to the primary school.

As for this world, it was [Reality] and not the [Game World].

It was only a story that a game scenario writer managed to write by chance by seeing what happened in reality in a kind of “prophetic dream”.

Still, by following the content of the game, Matsuri’s hope could come true to a certain extent.

Only, there was this one person..... there was a [Girl] that hadn’t appeared before in this world.

LINE HERE

LINE HERE

Author’s Notes:

Come to think of it, if this was to be placed within a sub-genre, what would it be? Urban low-fantasy? Or thinking about the 3rd book, high fantasy?

Temple Story

[Layered Love Story *Ikemen Paradise*] added.

Next time, the story begins to move. Finally.

Chapter 10: I Got Involved in all Sorts of Trouble, Part 1

“Time sealing technique.....? What’s that?”

Onzada’s father and elder brothers came home less often nowadays.

Onzada, who was the fourth male amongst five brothers, knew that his parents’ families were a bit different from those of the general [Shrines].

Priests in ordinary temples did not learn how to fight and train their bodies. They did not go out to purge evil spirits.

His own father destroyed evil spirits that normal people couldn’t even touch that possessed other people by filling up his body with “Ki” which was a mixture of the body’s own energy and the power drawn from the outside air.

Onzada, as a child who knew of it, admired it as an “ally of justice”, and devoted himself to practicing “Ki” to the point of exclusion.

Onzada, as he was now, has power approaching either his eldest brother or close to that of his second brother, who was without peer. When his eldest brother came home, he asked to be taken along for a demon extermination.

Of course, he was refused. Still, Onzada that clung on to him, causing his elder brother to be greatly embarrassed and inadvertently spilled out one of his secrets.

That was: the [Time-sealing technique].

“Onzada, do you know of the [Mountain]?”

“Yeah..... It’s where father and brother go to help out, no?”

“Several years ago, there was a [Shrine Maiden] who reported from the [Mountain] of a prophetic vision. It seems that there will be a tremendous [Evil] that will appear in the world about 19~20 years from now. *At that time*, we, cannot do anything but send it to the *past*.”

“Hah? I don’t understand, Aniki.”

“I don’t understand it well myself, but it seems that there’s a technique that uses the “zero” and the “twelve” figures, and seems to be called the [Hourglass Technique.]”

“I don’t understand at all.”

“What I do know is that we’ll be able to defeat that [Evil] *several years* before it commences its assault, I mean.”

“Beat it before it comes.....?”

“If we can successfully defeat it, then the world will be peaceful in 20 years. Now, though, the [Evil] has caused the evil spirits to increase in number. Leave all these evil spirits in these few years to Father and I.”

“.....But”

“Onzada should continue to train for the future. It will be your responsibility to seal that [Evil] that will come back 20 years into the past. If you don’t, I won’t be able to protect my future wife.”

“Well, I don’t know.....but, I understand.”

The story was too difficult for him to understand, but the fact of the matter was that within a few years, there would be considerable danger. Based on that, knowing that he had been entrusted with the “future”, he obediently nodded.

“.....”

Protecting the future..... It wasn’t the teasing of his brother, but that singular girl that floated up in the back of Onzada’s mind, and he hurriedly shook that image from his head in a fluster.

* * *

I’ve move into the second grade in elementary school.

There have been no changes..... is what I’d like to say, but it’s changing bit by bit.

Ouji-kun has become extremely thin. While he was cute when he was like a plush toy up until a while ago, when he lost weight, his appearance became

much better.....

I often see the girls in the class call him [Prince-kun] and talk to him.

However, whenever I tried to join the conversation, the girls would all disappear at once. Are they still not accustomed to my appearance, or are they taking into consideration my needs.....

I don't want to know about the subtle feelings that I don't really know much about.

"Yuzu-chan, there was a party at our company, but Yuzu-chan didn't come? Uncle Tagaki and even Shijiyyuin-san's father came."

"Well..... It's kind of a little bit too high society for me....."

Where even people like the president of a company and a real Princess-sama like Kako went? My father would be troubled if a "fake Princess-sama" like myself went.

Besides, at a party, if I was to get along well with the party's organizer's child, even if I was being watched with strange looks, strange rumors wouldn't spring up.

Even though it was such a wonderful party, Kouki-kun and his father didn't attend.

I heard that the relationship between Kouki-kun's parents and his grandparents weren't good because of the matter of "land speculation".

When I say "rumors", it was something I heard from the "Spirit of the Wakame Seaweed" using hand gestures in the ramen at the ramen shop where the Dad was working.

..... I wonder if I'm just tired.

By the way, only Misa and I could see the "Spirit of the Wakame". It's surely because both of us have pure and innocent hearts.

*

"Are you a child from this shopping district?"

While Misa and I were playing in the alleyway beside the ramen shop, an

elegant man in his mid-twenties talked to me.

I could tell that his suit was fine at a glance. Behind him was someone in a black suit with a bulge in it that made Misa a little bit frightened.

“..... and you are?”

I was a little wary, but I asked him in a childlike way.

Still, noticing that I was trying to protect Misa, the man took an exaggerated step forwards, turning a sweet smile at us.

“I’m not a suspicious person. I spoke to you out of curiosity because there aren’t many children despite being such a wonderful shopping street.”

“Fuuhn~.....”

He was saying plausible things, but he ultimately didn’t answer my question. His face was smiling, but to me that smile looked like that of a “snake”.

“.....Misa, go back to dad-chan’s place.”

“Y-yeah”

I held off the conversation as I took Misa’s hand and went to the back of the shop.

Just when I thought that he would follow us, the man just gently shrugged and went back to the shopping district. Behind him, there were some more evil-looking men in black suits, but when the man looked lightly at them, they scattered into the shopping district.

I wonder what..... what was this feeling.

After talking to the man who was just here before, I felt something light up in my heart. What is this small, fluctuating “feeling” ...

“.....I won’t let anyone say that about our ramen!”

We got in from the back and heard dad-chan shouting loudly.

“.....O-onii-chan?”

“Misa, please stay here.”

Leaving the anxious Misa behind me, I looked at the situation happening in

the store.

Kotone-chan seems to not have come in yet, but in the shop there seems to be some ill-bred customer and dad-chan who were glaring at one another and in their own world. It wasn't a pleasant atmosphere.

The other customers sneakily payed up and leave the store. The grandpa who owned the shop was cutting green onions in the kitchen as if he couldn't hear them.

..... Actually, it's quite likely that he couldn't hear them.

And, sure enough, that customer was one of those evil-looking men near the man we had talked to earlier.

"What is this ramen? It seems I made a mistake, and should have eaten instant ramen, which would have been better."

"What was that? Could you say that again? "

"It's a fraud to take my money like this. Ramen is supposed to be fully stewed with pork and chicken, and at the moment when it's at its best, it is supposed to be a clear and refreshing soup, and not skimped on time or material or effort like this."

This hoodlum, he's actually a great lover of ramen, isn't he?

"And you call these noodles? Is this used paper? I thought it was a rubber band."

"You little... You can't even use the chopsticks properly, so what are you going on about"

"I don't have to eat it. Aah, but if it were in some remote region, I might still be able to tolerate it. Your store should just go out of business quickly!"

"This bastard....."

Oops, that's a no no. That man absolutely refused to make a move, but was waiting for dad-chan to hit him.

I'm also..... feeling like my heart is throbbing.

"Ooh, a brat!"

“Yuzu-chan, get back.”

As I entered the store, both the hoodlum and dad-chan spoke.

Dad-chan put his knife down first. If he were to leave the kitchen as it was now, it would be a breach of the firearms and swords laws.

“Why did you decide to eat ramen?”

“Yu-Yuzu-chan?”

Replying with a cheerful look full of smiles, Dad-chan had a confused expression on his face.

..... It's been a while since I felt like this. I directed my look at the hoodlum. He's got a violent presence. And he's radiating malicious intent.....

Was my heart thumping? Maybe it's because I met that man just before, but.....?

For some reason..... it seems..... *really tasty*.

“.....tsuuu”

As I gazed at him, the thug's body stiffened and he shut up.

I wonder what he saw..... I won't do anything, you know? I'm just a harmless, helpless child?

..... It's okay. After seeing such a superb man, you are unsatisfactory.

“Sit down, uncle.”

“.....”

The hoodlum's eyes began to swim as the child smiled cutely at him.

Perhaps the uncle is only looking at my *eyes*. Dad-chan seemed to notice something between the hoodlum and me, and seemed to notice the unusual state of events despite being confused.

“.....Sit down.”

When I whispered please in a low voice, the hoodlum sat down slowly next to myself, as I sat down at the counter.

“Grandpa-chan, dad-chan, Ramen for two. Please put plenty of seaweed.”

“O-, oh.....”

“Aiyooo”

Instead of Dad-chan who seemingly hasn’t kept pace with reality, it was grandpa shop owner who started to make ramen briskly.He heard me.

“Right, there we go.”

In the blink of an eye, the ramen noodles were layered onto the wakame, and placed in front of us.

“Eat. Is it delicious?”

“.....”

“.....eat.”

At the end, when I was muttering softly, the hoodlum hurried, and began to eat ramen greedily. Oh no, how shameless.

“.....Goho, guho”

Yeah, dad-chan’s ramen is delicious, but grandpa-chan’s ramen is also delicious.

When I glanced to my side at him, it seems that he’d been possessed by the “spirit of the wakame” in his bowl and not mine, and it seems to be *invading* his stomach vigorously along with the noodles.

“.....”

..... Uwaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhh

The hoodlum’s face was starting to turn “green”.

What.....? Why did it become like this? I felt like it just happened on impulse.

Surely, it’s because of him. Sorry? If you want to resent, resent your boss.

The green-colored hoodlum, put down a large bill while shaking unsteadily like a “fish taking its first bipedal steps on land” and went off.

It’s a little bit too much, but it also includes the service charge (being next to a beautiful little girl).

If I stayed here, would I meet that *wonderful* person again?

Chapter 11: I Got Involved in all Sorts of Trouble, Part 2

“No, Yuzu-chan, you don’t have to come every day you know!?”

From that day earlier onwards, I’ve been waiting for that delicious..... *cough*, for that wonderful person to come to dad-chan’s ramen shop, because I couldn’t go meet in the places where hoodlums gathered.

I think dad-chan thinks that I’m apologetic and that’s the reason I come every day.

Should I extend my net to the other shops too.....?

“.....Yuzu, you, what did you do?”

That’s rude, Kotone-chan.

“I am waiting for that lovely man to come.”

“Heeh..... Yuzu likes older men. It’s honestly a bad hobby.”

I don’t want to be told that by Kotone.....

Since I was here so often, I began to assist the shop along with Misa, and the number of customers seems to have increased.

“I will help my onii-chan and make this ramen shop a splendid one.”

“Yeah, that’s amazing, you can do it Misa.”

“Yeah, Yuzu-chan.”

Misa is the same age as me, but I felt like she was cute and young like if she was my little sister.

As I was kneading the cheeks of the cute Misa, Kotone, who heard Misa’s declaration came in.

“Before that, is this shop going to stay in business forever? I hope that it can continue until he can run it alone.....”

“Eh? Why? There’re a lot of customers.”

The harassment from the hoodlums had also been decreasing.

As soon as the hoodlums who were harassing the other shops came around to this place, I entertained them, and they all became *honest*. Before I knew it, the harassment to the entire shopping district was reduced.

It's a lucky break? Or maybe something a little different.

"Hey, the shopkeeper is getting pretty old, no? He said that he would return to the countryside and retire once he couldn't make soup. He has good skills too, but it's important for the customers to trust the shopkeeper's taste."

"Yeah, Ojii-chan's ramen has a kind taste to it, don't you think?"

"I too, like grandpa-chan's ramen."

It's not going to turn out well. Trust in the product..... or perhaps I should say it differs from "selling".

Will it sell if people's complexions turn green?

*

One day, the chauffeur didn't come to pick me up due to mother's circumstances.

Although I called a taxi and it was okay, only Ooba-onii-chan had returned when I got home, and onii-chan had to eat ramen with me while we waited together.

Both Father and Mother seemed to know about dad-chan and Misa. I knew, but I couldn't do much more to lend a hand and say that we won't stop involving ourselves, it's a subtle position.

The adults were not being honest.

"I'm going to buy some juice~"

"Don't go too far~"

"Yes~"

It's not a matter of me wanting to drink juice particularly, but recently, it's been getting hotter, so dealing with the roaring fire in a ramen shop is tough.

I have become much stronger, but from the point of view of others I'm still considered weak.

"Haa..... how refreshing"

It's comfortable at night. As always, I'm not very sleepy. I might be turning nocturnal.

I don't feel afraid of the night like a normal child, and since I haven't had any more run-ins with random attackers as well in this half-year, it's been a relief.

Something came unexpectedly on such a night.....

"....."

While I was chilling my forehead with the cold tea that I'd bought from a vending machine, I saw a black 'cat' in the side alley in the shopping area.

A jet-black cat with silver eyes like the one I saw at the shrine..... From the depths of my heart, 'something' came out, and I felt like there was something itching in me.

".....Who..... are you.....?"

When the words fell from my lips, the black cat's silhouette..... was getting further away.

"Wait."

I started chasing after it once I noticed. My legs aren't fast. But I will follow [Him].

.....[Him]?.....

"Kyaa"

"Uwahh"

I suddenly bumped into someone. The other party was also tiny, but I was weak so I fell over and landed on my bottom.

".....ah..."

The black cat..... was nowhere to be found.

"Yuzu-chan?"

“Ah, Kouki-kun?”

The person I bumped into was Kouki-kun. At the corner of the road?

“..... Would it be better if I was holding bread in my mouth?”

“What are you talking about?”

Kouki-kun reached out his hand to me to support me up, even though he didn't understand what I was saying.

“Sorry, Yuzu-chan..... but, why are you here?”

“.....Kouki-kun. I was at a shop with which I was acquainted... and then... I went for a walk.”

“I too... went for a walk.”

This lie, I'll endure it. It's a somewhat strange atmosphere..... Ah, come to think of it, he had a poor relationship with his grandfather over that land speculation ruckus, no?

“.....Then, goodbye.”

“Ehhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!?”

Kouki-kun raised his voice in shock as I tried to escape quickly..... such a troublesome fellow.

“With this flow, isn't it like listening to a story?”

“No, it's troublesome.”

“.....That's way too honest! You're kinder and more friendly in school.”

“A troublesome man, you are.”

“How mean.”

He seems more like a little 'cat' than 'the scion of a distinguished family'..... I remembered that I'd lost sight of the black cat because of this.

“Understood. Speak.”

“.....Yuzu-chan sure moves at her own pace. Is this your 'core'?”

That's right. I am a narrow-minded person.

“You can think of this however you please. While Ouji-kun is someone who’s easy to be with, Yuzu-chan is the only friend I have with which I can discuss difficult things.”

Well, that might be true. Because we’re surrounded by *ordinary* elementary school students.

“What about Yonjiuman Yuuki-kun? That person seems to understand, but.....”

“That guy is even more insistent on doing things at his own pace than you. Certainly, he feels like he doesn’t have time for other people.”

“..... and I’m free?”

“Well, well, I don’t mean that. But you seem to be soft-hearted, and there’s also the fact that you don’t deeply involve yourself even if you do know the story, Also.....”

Kouki-kun scratched the end of his nose with his fingers as if he was feeling a little shy.

“Kako trusts Yuzu-chan..... I was wondering if she hated me because she kept a distance from me, but..... Yuzu-chan told Kako something, did you not?”

“.....Well”

Hoho..... the misunderstanding has been unraveled, and the distance with his fiancé has shrunk all at once?

“Yuzu-chan..... please stop grinning like that, you look like my mother.”

“Well, it’s alright. It’s all good.”

“Yup.”

My good friend Ouji-kun was becoming a handsome young man, and it was unfortunate that he was getting clung onto by the onee-samas in the upper years like a god of rot.

Kouki-kun’s story was, as expected, about his grandfather.

As expected, he didn’t talk about the land speculation, but it seems like they were gathering a *ridiculous* amount of money for a return to politics.

Kouki-kun's father was his grandfather's secretary and wanted to oppose the idea but he had found a bride in Germany when he'd gone overseas to study, and ignored the marriage that he had been forced into by the grandfather. Because of that, it seems like his father wasn't in a position to speak out against his grandfather.

"Kouki-kun hates his grandfather?"

"I don't hate him, but I don't like him either. As a *politician* I think he's amazingly upfront, but I don't have any good memories of conversations with him, and he treated my mother quite badly."

".....Fuhn~"

"Generally, the problem with my grandfather is having done things with the secretaries and the butlers for a long time, it's the problem of Kidou....."

"Kidou...san?"

"According to what Father says, it was a person that was willing to do anything for my grandfather, and it would have been good if that had been the only person, but when his son started to help out at work, he began doing unmentionably cruel things....."

Kidou-san..... and his son? These two people are the problem.

".....ah,"

"Did you hear that voice?"

From the other side of the road, came the sound of multiple men's voices.

"They came to look for me..... Sorry, Yuzu-chan, but thanks for listening. I was able to be happy for a while."

"Just listening to the conversation? I can't do anything you know."

"Hahaha, that's fine, then, I'll see you in school."

"See you again."

Kouki-kun disappeared into the dark residential district after shaking my hands lightly..... Although he's a distinguished son of a high-ranking family, it's still dangerous. I can't say anything about other people, though.

Maybe, a little bit of the problem that's plaguing this shopping district can be seen?

* * *

"Kidou, how's it going with that shopping district?"

In a luxurious office, an old man directed a sharp look at a young one.

There were three people in this room. An old man wearing traditional dress was sitting on the sofa, and a man in his prime stood near him, while the young man stood by the door which was further away.

"The eviction rate has exceeded 30%. Although it is taking a while....."

"That time is a problem. How much time do you think remains until the next election? And 30%? That hasn't even increased by 5% over the last month!"

"But, sir. There are only a few shopkeepers who own their shops remaining. If we clear them off, the other stores will accept being cleared out."

The man in his prime~ Kidou, had served this master since his father's generation.

He was a rather arrogant and ambitious man as a politician, and it wasn't just for money that he was doing land speculation; he understood that it was necessary for the development of the region, and felt an impatient hatred for the shopkeepers who were reluctant to leave.

"Shops like that should just be pushed onto the tracks with those usual guys."

"Sir, we can't do that. In the current situation where the media is still paying attention, if an incident related to the speculation occurs, then they will suspect that it is linked to you, sir."

"That is no way to speak."

".....with all due respect."

It was the young man who had kept silent up until then.

"Control yourself, Kyoji, you're just a youngster."

"No, let's hear your opinion."

The old man stopped Kidou and turned to look at Kidou's son, Kyoji.

"The shopping district, has begun to regain its vibrancy recently. The people who've gotten involved with it have become strange and the development is delayed."

"..... What is there?"

"We have not been able to investigate, so it's currently still unknown. Although it's just a shopping district, if the uneasiness has disappeared and the vibrancy has returned, then all we need to is to add more uneasiness."

"However, won't we have to worry that this case involving a gang will be linked to us?"

"Yes, it would be best if incidents that have nothing to do with land speculation were to happen.for example,"

Catching the sharp gaze of the old man directly, Kyoji laughed faintly.

"The *children* in the shopping district *going missing*..... how does that sound that?"

Chapter 12: What I Wanted to Say, Part 1

Early in the autumn, I turned eight years old.

Recently, I've been a little busy after school. There was that practice, but mostly it was because I ate ramen in the shopping district and played with Misa. Also, when I explored the shopping district, I feel like the hoodlums were somewhat nervous recently. It's strange.

I also heard Kouki-kun's story by chance, but I get the feeling that it's not going in a good direction.

Next is taking care of the animals in the breeding shed with Kako. Ouji-kun also helped.

Ouji-kun has completely stopped eating snacks, and has become quite slim. And hence, I heard that Ouji-kun's parents wanted to see me.

..... Those parents who gave him that name? I was scared of that meeting, so I put it on hold. The excuse was that my body was still frail.

Was I really that weak?

"cough"

Because it was cold out, I caught a cough while I was outside.

".....oi, are you alright?"

Onzada-kun, who had begun to train seriously, stopped his ki-training and approached me.

The final reason why I was busy was because I was learning how to use ki with Onzada-kun. Even though I was taught for a year, I still can't do anything, so I often just observe Onzada-kun while taking a break.

"Well, it's just a little cough?"

"It's been getting colder recently... Since Yuzu's body is weak, you shouldn't make too much tea. See, your hands are becoming cold again."

Ah, that's just because I don't have much muscle, and it's cold out.

Onzada-kun was doing martial arts up until just now, so his hands when they held mine were still warm.

“Is Onzada-kun feeling warm? Your face is red.”

“Eh, it’s just that I’ve been moving around too much. Yours would be too, you know.”

When I let go of his hand, Onzada-kun threw over his jacket. And of course, I couldn’t catch it with my hands, and ended up catching it with my face.

“*bleh*, it’s quite sweaty.”

“Hehe, have some patience with me.”

Still, I borrowed Onzada-kun’s coat and put it over my shoulders. This time, I’ll value the contribution.

In this way, Onzada-kun began to train seriously beginning in summer, and I also felt his kindness. Even though I couldn’t master ‘ki’ after a long time, I was amazed but didn’t disturb him. I didn’t say that I wouldn’t come, after all.

Onzada-kun was a fifth-grader. As an 11 year old male, I understood that he was becoming a ‘man’ rather than a boy, but isn’t that too quick?

“.....What happened?”

“.....nn?”

Onzada-kun who was kneeling calmly turned to face my voice.

“What is.....?”

“Nnn~..... What is it? Did you get into a fight?”

“.....Something like that.”

When Onzada-kun returned to my side, he placed his hand on my head with a pop. He’s gotten taller.

“I will protect Yuzu’s *future* with my life. So be at ease.”

“.....”

Of course I knew that he didn’t mean it that way, but this is kinda.....

My face was red.

Also..... I think I heard the sound of a small 'chain' somewhere.

* * *

Onzada was feeling impatient.

Although it could be said that he was motivated, he, who had only practiced skills that looked cool as a child, made his parents very pleased that Onzada who had lacked 'mental fortitude' had begun to practice seriously, and his eldest brother who occasionally returned home regretted that he had spoken of the circumstances of the 'other side'.

"Onzada, don't overdo it. We still have nearly 20 years."

"It's alright, Brother. It's not unreasonable."

There have been groups in Japan that have defended the nation since time immemorial.

Destroying evil spirits and monsters that were the enemies of the world, readjusting the flow of the 'ki' of the land, they had protected Japan from 'foreign enemies' for more than a thousand years.

Buddhist priests. Exorcists. Spiritualists. Of the ones who had handed down techniques for exorcising the foreign demons since long ago, the largest religious organization in the country..... had no clear name, but was commonly called the [Oyama].

Approximately 30% of the shrines and temples in the whole country were connected to the [Oyama], and of them, a tenth of them were families that directly exterminated evil spirits, and Onzada's family was one of them.

And when that [Powerful existence] was found under Tokyo, they used that power to more efficiently get rid of the evil spirits.

That existence was very sensitive to the things that could bring it harm.

Just like a little child.....

Onzada's elder brother also came to teach Onzada about that matter.

Because he wanted to know what kind of [Enemy] he was going to have to confront, and felt that sense of crisis, Onzada took even bolder actions.

“Good, this is fine.”

Changing into clothes that were easy-to-move in, they left their home at midnight.

Although Onzada was delighted about his progress with his serious training, as ever, he wasn't making an excited face about his 'ki' training.

After all, it was difficult for a child to handle and easy for them to injure themselves, he honestly felt that one would be in danger of neglecting one's studies if they seriously delved into it.

It was a hard truth, however, that to become a true priest of the [Oyama], one needed a certain level of education. The fourth son of Onzada's family went to a good university and his parents were thinking of letting him get a regular job.

“..... It's fine, for I know I am on the side of justice!”

Onzada said something that he would never be able to say in front of his parents absentmindedly.

He didn't want to protect many people, just those few precious people.

For that reason, Onzada was planning on making a 'prayer shop' which would leave him relatively free.

“”Onzada's House of Worship”or something like that.”

Even if he had grown, he was still a child like that.

Well, the reason why Onzada had gone out of his family home in the middle of the night was for the sake of training his battle skills.

Onzada realized himself that his 'ki' level was close to that of his older brother. The reason for that rapid growth was that 'pseudo-ki' that that female junior was using.

If anyone saw it, they would think of it as a failure, even she herself thought of it as a failure, but Onzada realized that it was close to psychic powers. To the degree that Onzada felt that there was 'power' in his vicinity.

Despite her cheek, it was easier to talk to that junior and it seemed that her

mental strength was great, although she herself was weak. At first, he had only taught her 'ki' because he had let his guard down from her beauty, but now Onzada liked her as a person.

When his father and brothers used 'ki', they forged their hearts with training, keeping their hearts still with willpower, and controlled their ki. That was because it was a *stable* way of doing so and would cause fewer accidents.

However, how that girl used her 'power' was the complete opposite.

Rather than letting it run wild with her immature feelings, she let it run wild in a stable manner with her high mental strength. Even though it sounded unreasonable just saying it, it fit her perfectly on the first try.

Onzada listened to his brothers' words, but felt that this power method suited him.

".....I wonder where it is."

Onzada calmed his wandering mind and searched for that presence. Looking for the spirits of the land or a wandering ghost. They didn't have the presence of a living being, but there were times where he could feel the flow of a gaze and their emotion.

While it would be especially strong if it were an evil spirit or a vengeful ghost, they were rare, so encountering one shouldn't be common.

"It's here....."

Although spirits weren't visible to the normal eye, they were able to be seen by a person with strong 'ki'. And by recognizing that it was 'present', it became clearer.

It was at the corner of the park. He didn't know if the spirit had been in an accident or had committed suicide. It was a vague outline of a middle-aged male, but as it turned its dark eyes towards Onzada he recognized it as the spirit.

".....uuuh"

It wasn't the first time he'd seen a spirit, but it was his first time confronting one, and hence Onzada felt a bit of cold feet.

“.....You, did you want to say something?”

Until now, Onzada who felt that he had only seen spirits as something to ‘destroy,’ spoke to it.

Neither his father nor brother felt anything, they just got the exorcism done. What Onzada felt, although it might just have been his gullibility and childish sentiment, caused him to hesitate in doing so.

“[.....]”

The gaze of the ghost tethered to the earth shifted slightly. Following the gaze, he found the flowers that someone had offered it withering, and a small sake bottle was visible.

“.....Is it okay if I open it?”

Even though he asked, the spirit didn’t answer. Onzada opened the cap of the bottle of sake, and splashed it on the stone that the flower rested on.

“Is that okay?”

After being asked again, the spirit looked at Onzada.

“Can you even talk?*cough*”

Onzada made an unpleasant face and coughed unexpectedly when he licked a bit of the liquor. Seeing that the expression of the bound spirit seemed gentler than before, Onzada took a closer look.

“Is that enough?”

“[.....]”

Onzada scattered the spirit with the ‘ki’ in his palm. There was no resistance..... at all.

Onzada didn’t feel any sense of euphoria at his first exorcism, and his mouth twisted with the taste of the remaining sake.

“Haah..... how bitter.”

*

On that night, Onzada exorcised another bound spirit.

It was the spirit of an infant with an indeterminate shape, that spoke about a fairy tale that was somewhat familiar, and then faded away even without being struck by ki.

“.....”

Remembering the taste of the sake that he had licked a while ago, Onzada felt like drinking. He grimaced, since he was unable to do so as he was a grade-schooler.

Onzada was shocked by the realization of the truth.

“..... This was... not a practice battle at all, was it?”

He was slow to notice it.

“.....geh.”

And as he walked along looking for a strong presence, he saw something strange in the corner of a scrap bin.

Simply put, it was the form of a ghost of a glitzy woman. Strangely enough the outline was very clear and so was the malice.

Remembering his brothers' words: that the number and malice of the evil spirits were increasing because of the [Evil], Onzada's face turned green.

It was the kind of evil spirit that made him want to call out for his brother, but Onzada hesitated. It wasn't that he was overestimating his own power, but that the evil spirit had collected other floating spirits and was eating them.

“.....Shit.”

Because they were already dead, there was nothing he could do.

While thinking so, Onzada rushed out towards that evil spirit.

“Stop it!”

Screaming that, Onzada infused his fist with the ki of his 'anger' and drove it into the back of the spirit.

“[KishaaaaaAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!]”

At the evil spirit's 'scream', the scrap bin around it cracked and shook,

bursting open.

“Are you serious.....?”

It was a fairly powerful evil spirit. If this was just the influence of that [Evil], then just how much power would that evil have?

“Uwah!”

Onzada managed to dodge the evil spirit’s swipe, but the back of his hand that had touched it slightly was bruised.

“..... Is this a spiritual attack?”

He couldn’t help it. To say nothing of exorcism, with Onzada’s power, even escape was difficult.

“...[Holy]...”

At this point, the evil spirit was wrapped in a pillar of light by that voice.

“[GyaAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!?]”

The evil spirit screamed in agony.

“W-what?”

A few meters behind the evil spirit, there was a black, diminutive shadow.

It was wielding a sword as large as it was, and, with a speed that even Onzada couldn’t follow, it slashed the evil spirit vertically down from the head.

“[.....o..... ah.....]”

To easily destroy that kind of evil spirit, he wondered if that sword was some sort of divine instrument.

“.....Y-you...”

That person who was wearing black clothing and whose face was covered in a black mask was even younger than Onzada, who was only in the fifth grade himself, and looked like a very young elementary schooler given their height.

“.....”

And after glancing at Onzada who was dumbfounded, that black-masked person suddenly began to slash the floating spirits that were drifting around

with the sword.

Every time it slashed, Onzada saw that something like light was being absorbed by the black covering, and he instinctively kicked them.

“Stop it!”

“!?”

Onzada’s ki-loaded kick was caught by that large sword and spat an unusual spark.

Even knowing that that black-masked person was his savior, Onzada couldn’t overlook them.

“You, what are you doing?”

“.....?”

The black-masked person looked at Onzada oddly, and then nonchalantly swung the sword at him.

““””

The two of them faced each other dead on.

At that moment,

Jajan, jajajajan

The theme song of a certain old man played, and the two of them unexpectedly lost the tension.

“Wai-wait a moment”

After clarifying, Onzada took out his mobile phone with a red face, and his face changed at the email with no title and no content.

Onzada felt the anxiety that bound his heart as he looked at the mail.

“.....Yuzu?”

Chapter 13: What I Wanted to Say, Part 2

“What’s making all that noise?”

I came to the shopping district ramen shop again today.

If you’re eating ramen all the time like this, you would get fat, so Kotone-chan, who noticed that number on the scale for her was terrifying, decided that today she would be swimming at the gym instead of coming.

“Erm, well, it seems that there’s some roadwork?”

To my mutter, Misa, who was doing homework with me, raised her head to tell me.

“Is there a lot in the works this time?”

“Well, I don’t know.”

When I looked outside from the window of the restroom instead of the inside of the store, I could hear some sounds but I couldn’t see where they were coming from.

“Just how many places are they working.....?”

The roadwork itself weren’t unusual, but was it being done all over the shopping area?

Since it’s a school holiday tomorrow, it’s not a problem even if Kotone-chan comes to pick me up, but I wonder if the car can even enter?

Well, it can’t be helped; I guess I’ll have to stay at the shop.

Now that I think on it, the backroom and the second floor of this ramen shop is grandpa shopkeeper’s house, and Misa and Dad-chan are lodging on the second floor.

“Yuzu-chan, you should stay over~.”

“What should I do?”

“Well, let’s sleep together in the futon.

We’re sharing a bed. Yeah, that’s nice, isn’t it... When I started to drift off into

my own thoughts, Dad-chan came from the shop to the restroom with his cellphone.

“Yuzu-chan, there was a phone call from Ooba-kun, but since there were so many roads that were blocked due to construction work today, he might be late, so please make your way back by taxi before it’s too late.”

“Oh.”

“And Yuzu-chan, did your phone’s battery run out? I heard that Ooba-kun couldn’t reach you.”

“Really.....?”

I took out my mobile phone from my bag, and indeed, it really was off.

When I pressed and held down the power button, it turned on, but after a couple of seconds, I saw the picture of an empty battery on the screen.

“A dead battery, huh.....”

You can use our shop’s phone, so stay in contact. Would you like to call a taxi?”

“Yuzu-chan, you’re not going to stay over.....?”

Misa looked sad when she heard.

“.....Dad-chan, is it no good for me to stay?”

“That’s not what I mean. And I’m not Misa’s father! Recently Misa has been imitating you and calling me [Dad-chan], so the rest of the people in the shopping district are also starting to call me [Dad] these days!”

“It was an accident.....?”

“It obviously wasn’t an accident!?”

As expected, the straight riposte from Dad-chan is strong.

After that, I called Ooba-onii-chan and then asked Dad-chan to call me a taxi.

Ah, I wish I’d charged my mobile phone before the taxi had come..... I managed to charge it for one minute just before the taxi arrived.

It was around nine when I boarded the taxi and the ramen shop was closed.

It was quite late. It took me well over an hour to get a cab. At this rate, it might really be better to just stay over.

“I’m sorry, Miss. Because there was so much construction work ongoing, there were only a few roads that I could use.”

“Is that so?”

Because the young driver with a well-built physique was talking to me, I answered properly, and went with the flow.

If I can’t even handle small talk, I don’t think I can ever become a full member of society. I am an elementary school student.

“Miss’s uniform, are you from the Takamine school?”

“Yes, that’s right. You know of it?”

“Well, it’s the best school in this area. With that kind of school tuition, I think it’s impossible for my children to attend.”

“There aren’t many of them, but there are children from ordinary families, you know?”

“Haha, those children are clearly treasured by their parents. If I had a cute little girl like you, dad would have liked her to go to Takamine, too.”

“..... Dad?”

Does Dad know Driver-san? No, it’s not a taxi company that’s often around here? Come to think of it, I haven’t seen any such company, either.

Anyway, this driver, seems rather talkative.....

“When I got on the taxi, didn’t your dad come to see you off? What a pleasant parent-child relationship.”

“.....”

Did he think that Dad-chan and I were parent and child? It’s strange putting it into words.

People who come by the shopping district often would know that I call him [Dad-chan], but when did this driver hear of it?

Even though he was from the taxi company that was used by the shop, he didn't seem acquainted with dad-chan.

And even though he's a taxi driver, he doesn't seem to know where I'm going...

"....."

"....."

The conversation got interrupted as I stayed silent.

The driver seemed to be trying to get "something" out of me. No..... It seems that he wanted "confirmation"?

"..... Mr. driver, isn't this the wrong way?"

"..... My apologies, but there are many roads that aren't accessible thanks to the road construction."

This might be bad..... I'm not one to panic in such a situation, generally, but it's quite the distance between being afraid of the danger and being at ease.

That strange [power] doesn't always come out according to the situation. Since it comes out only when I tried to protect someone, I still don't know for sure if I'm in danger.

Besides, this construction work itself is also suspicious.

"I wish to get off here. Please stop the car."

"..... I can't do that. It's only a little more until we get onto the highway."

"The highway?"

Although it could take up to 20 minutes by car to get to the ramen shop from the Toukaki estate, there's no need at all to use the expressway.

Ah, this is bad. Even if it wasn't a kidnapper or some devious criminal, there's no doubt at all that this is one of those corrupt taxis.

"If you don't stop..... I'll get violent?"

"Heeh..... why not try?"

The driver dropped his veneer of goodness, and his voice dripped with

condescension. It's a guilty confession.

".....Then, I won't hesitate. *pusu*"

Without a single ounce of restraint, I stabbed a sharp pencil into the base of the driver's skull.

"GyaaAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!?"

He howled. But, because I was weak, it only stabbed in about a centimeter. I pulled out the tip of the pencil, and rolled myself under the seat.

gagon!

"*cough*"

The fake driver made a sound like he was spitting out air, and the car came to a sudden stop. Thinking about it properly, it would've been dangerous if he'd collided with an oncoming car. But it's too late by far now.

".....You... you cheeky brat"

"Oh my, you survived?"

While he bled profusely from his forehead and neck, he stretched out his hand to grab me, but I gave an elegant smile, and left the car from the back seat.

Bag: ok, wallet: ok, uniform: a little wrinkled, and the mobile phone was charged to 3% or less. I'm all set.

"But... where is this place.....?"

Apparently, it seems to be a street lined with office buildings. There seems to be a lot of places without power because of the hour of the day.

Let's search for a police box for the time being. Even though I can't see it, I think there's a convenience store somewhere.

".....Why..."

That [Black Cat] was in the alley of the office town.....

Those silver eyes stared straight at me. Did you want to say something.....? What did you want to tell me? What on earth are you.....

“Ah, wait!”

As I approached it, it ran away. Even as I stopped, it ran further away. But, you were the one to appear before me.

“Something” was scratching with its claws in the depths of my heart and mind.

It urged me to follow [Him] as he ran away.

I’m out of breath. It’s natural, since I have no stamina. But I could still move more? And I was faster? And... stronger?

The fractured memories that my daily life had painted over, slowly regained their color.

You..... what did you want of me?

“You brat, I’ve found you!”

“.....eh?”

Where..... was I? I was in something that looked like a vacant lot when I recovered my consciousness, and from behind me, while holding the back of his neck with a cloth that was dyed with spots of red, was the fake driver, looking at me angrily.

“.....oh my, you seem energetic.”

“Stop playing the fool.”

Beside the fake driver, there were also some other ill-bred ruffians.

At my words, the fake driver clenched his fists and came at me. Will it hit?

“Cease your actions, Shimabara.”

“.....tch”

A calm voice came from behind him, and the fake driver Shimabara stiffened, and stopped.

Two black-suited men came from the right of the car. A slender man walked in the middle of them.

Surely, meeting like this in this place.....

“Long time no see, Miss.”

Said the man calmly, with a snake-like smile. The very man who I met in that shopping district.

... To lead me to such a place, you, what did you want from me.

Chapter 14: What I Wanted to Say, Part 3

“It seems that nowadays, elementary schoolers also have stuff like this.”

“.....society nowadays is dangerous?”

I was struck with an idea, and tried to do something I hadn't with the battery-powered cellphone inside of my pocket.

Even if the battery was running out, it would still startup for a few seconds. I tried to touch the screen while it was in my pocket, and if I was lucky it would redial someone.

However, my unnatural movements were discovered, and my mobile phone was taken.

“Fumu..... The battery seems to be out. Oi.”

One of the black-suited men handed my cellphone to that man I met in the shopping district.

“After charging it and checking the contents, leave it at the riverside there. It's likely that they'll track the GPS function. Also, watch out for fingerprints.”

“Understood.”

“You, what are you doing.....?”

As I asked him with a somewhat unpleasant premonition, he had a thin smile on his face and bowed as if he was facing a noble.

“Please, call me Kyoji. Oh yeah, you were carrying that phone. But it's so common for children to go missing in the river”

So said Kyoji as he cut himself off in the middle of his explanation.

Was it because it was troublesome? Did he think that children wouldn't understand? Maybe it was both.

But surely it was something like this.

If they mistook that I had drowned in the river, the police would take their time to search it. But since I wasn't going to be in the river, the investigation

would be derailed.

And finally, he was going to make me a “drowned body”.

..... *again*.

From the depths of my heart, “something” like a fragment of a memory emerged. It gradually connected the dots little by little and filled with color.

There was something like this before.....? I was kidnapped..... what did I do? I remember little boys and girls..... eh?

As it was, I was taken onto their car and taken somewhere.

By the feel of it, it was about an hour. I thought that we were going quite fast because we got on a highway along the way, but we got off and on several times, and ended up in a narrow street as if we were waiting for someone.

As I glimpsed behind me, the fake taxi driver who was sitting in the rear passenger’s seat stared at me with eyes filled with hatred, and I waved at him lightly while smiling.

“You’re rather composed.”

Kyoji looked at me with eyes of amazement.

“Is it uncute?”

“You’re definitely composed.....”

While that was happening, we entered a region with many trees, and reached a building.

“.....A school?”

“Yes, that’s right. It was a school that went out of business five years ago due to the decrease in enrolment. They had thought that the countermeasures against the declining birthrate would be effective and the number of children would increase, but the results are as you see.”

“Even though countermeasures and subsidies are alright... with no hope for the future, the number of children won’t increase, you know?”

“..... are you really an elementary schooler?”

I was taken out of the car and was having a conversation while we walked, but Kyoji stopped for a moment and stared at my face.

“Yes, I’m a second-grader in elementary school. In other words, I have nothing to do at all with that shopping district.”

It was meaningless to keep it hidden now that we were here. I didn’t mean to capitalize on it anyway.

“As expected, you are smart, *Yuzu-san*”

Kyoji called my name despite me not having introduced myself.

“When did you notice that we were aiming for the shopping district?”

“That aside..... I also thought that it would be good to show my hand. But..... are you ok with me?”

“At first I thought that you were the child from that shop..... but it was good either way. Because Yuzu-san is famous in the shopping district.”

“.....Life sure is full of parts where things don’t go one’s way.”

“Truly, you are unlike any child. If you were an adult, I might well fall in love with you. It is a pity that I will not see you again.”

“Yeah..... it is.”

Really..... why am I not afraid?

I knew that it might be possible that I wouldn’t be able to see my family any more, but in one corner of my head, I got this sense that it wasn’t entirely certain that if I was killed, my life would disappear. or so I thought of myself.

Whatever kind of elementary school student I am.

“I’m going to the principal’s office on the second floor of the office building.”

“It is because there’s a reception area?”

“That’s right. The leader wanted to know the progress, so we came to this place. Will you make trouble if we meet?”

“It can’t be helped..... I wonder if you’re having trouble with your

subordinates?”

“Really, I’m just a worrier.”

There wasn’t any electricity except for some emergency lamps in the corner of the hallway where we passed by. When I entered the principal’s office, there was an older man that looked very much like Kyoji, and next to him was a powerful-looking grandpa in a kimono.

There were several other black-clothed guys in this room. By the time I’d gotten into the principal’s office and the school building, I’d seen dozens of these black-suited, ill-bred men.

“Kidou, is this child related to the shopping district?”

“Yes. She is related to one of the people living in the shopping district. Because her face is well known, it should be enough to fuel the anxiety.”

“Might you be Kouki-kun’s grandfather?”

As I said my thoughts, the grandfather’s eyes suddenly widened, and he looked straight at my face.

“.....that uniform, is it Takamine’s? I see, did you hear about me from Kouki? Loose-lipped fellow. It would have been good if he had just married who I chose for him. It’s horrible to think of that child as my grandson.”

“.....”

Seriously..... talking about doing whatever you like.

“I am looking for someone to carry on my post. Let’s carry on with the plan after I return to the world of politics.”

“Understood. Make sure you get a good partner that will bear me decent grandchildren.”

“Is Sir going to make one himself?”

Said Kyoji from the side, interrupting the conversation between the grandfather and Kidou.

“Hey, Kyoji!”

“Hmm..... Myself? That is also agreeable, but it would be a scandal if I had a

child at this age. Even if I raised him as a grandchild, a girl from a well-educated and well-groomed family would not accept being relegated to just having such a child. Besides, I do not have the time to wait until he becomes an adult.”

“Several years from now..... Thinking about it, it should be someone of a good family, and with intelligence. Hey... here, is someone who has seen through the plan that Sir is behind the entirety of everything.....”

“.....Hohoooh.”

Suddenly, everyone's eyes were staring at me.

“She’ll be able to have children in about 5~6 years. She’s pretty and has a good head. Furthermore, she’s a *missing* person too.”

“Hmm.”

I could feel their “malice” bubbling up like hot coal tar.....

From within me, something brushed aside my warm everyday life, and a dark lump slowly appeared, smiling faintly.

A person who doesn't think of others as people, a rotten heart. Aah.....
why.....

It just looks so delicious.....

“ ”

Kyoji felt something, and then started back when he looked at me.

With his eyes following me quietly, perched on top of the large tree outside of the window of the principal's office, was that [Black Cat].

..... I see. [He], wanted to tell me this.....

I..... am a [Demon].

“.....

[illegible]

Chapter 15: The Demonic Christmas

“Why did you follow me!”

“.....”

Onzada had received Yuzu’s “silent mail”, and had taken action immediately.

Although he had sent back several e-mails, she didn’t reply, and even when he called, Yuzu’s mobile phone didn’t connect; either because it was out of the signal range, or it just wasn’t on.

He didn’t know what was happening. Still, Onzada ran with an uneasy feeling constricting his chest. Somehow, he could feel which direction Yuzu was.

And that black-masked person who saw what was in Onzada’s heart was running behind Onzada, following him.

“.....What is it?”

Even though Onzada was irritated by the black-masked man who didn’t reply at all even when called out, he wasn’t now.

Gathering the spirit of the earth, he immediately filled his body with his ‘ki’. Due to his need, Onzada was able to bolster his weak physical ability with ki.

Nonetheless, the black-masked person was able to keep up with more to spare.

And that big sword that he used, it would seem to be as heavy as the user at that size, but the black-masked man was wielding it in one hand.

“.....What’s up with that guy”

“.....!?”

“...Ee!?”

They stopped their feet at the same time, and looked far towards the horizon where they were going.

“What.....? Right now”

“.....”

There was the sense that some horrible [Power] was spreading out. He couldn't tell what it was coming from, but it was clearly out of the norm.

And as if he felt it as well, the black-masked person went running in that direction.

“Hey, wait.This”

* * *

“

aAAA

In the dark, abandoned school, it began abruptly.

The adults who were conversing felt something about the [Presence] of the girl who had gone silent change, and suddenly, she began to laugh out loudly.

Bishiiiiiiiiii!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

“Hiie?!”

“Wha-!”

The window panes cracked, and not only the principal's office, but every single piece of glass in the school was turned gray with tiny fractures.

Those who were outside the principal's office looked about at the ominous "sound of laughter" that came from their surroundings, and those who were outside the school building felt uneasy, but hurried inside.

And..... those of them inside the principal's office witnessed incredible things.

The whites of the adorable girl's eyes had gone turned completely black, as if corroded by the darkness, and in those black eyes, a blood-red glow. From the white teeth that peeked out of her cherry-blossom-pink lips emerged beast-like fangs that were a brilliant, crystalline red.

Not only her appearance, but even her very [Essence] became violent and repulsive, and everyone who was at the scene couldn't even move because they were gripped by this very real and unknown fear.

At the “Monster” that looked like a dreamy, beautiful girl.

“hiii”

The fact that that girl had grabbed the head of the leader, Kidou, and forcibly dislocated his back by sitting him down onto the floor caused everyone to realize that this was not a nightmare, but reality.

“.....ua, AA.....!”

Even though the girl had stopped laughing, that scornful laugh continued to echo inside their ears, and the creaking noise of a skull grating, as deep, crimson claws extended from those adorable little fingers and pierced into Kidou’s forehead, and he let out a scream of anguish.

“.....ah,”

While Kidou’s body suddenly looked dehydrated and went dry, his hand that was stretched out towards his son looking for salvation broke like a dead twig and fell to the floor.

“.....Thanks for the meal.”

“!”

As they heard the girl murmur, and saw her smiling brightly like a flower, Kenji rammed himself towards the door of the principal’s office, attempting to break it open.

“Sir, please get away quickly!”

“...o, Ah”

“tsch.”

Kyoji clicked his tongue, and kicked one of the black-clothed men that was still frozen towards the girl, but she deflected him away lightly, and as another one of the black-clothed men got involved, he struck the wall, his blood splattering brilliantly as it contrasted with the wall.

Seizing that gap, Kyoji ran out of the principal’s office with Lord Kuon.

“.....”

The girl didn’t pursue, and only smiled faintly with her mouth, as she touched the crack on the window panes with her hands.

“...[Close]...”

At that point, even though he felt a dreadful chill, the sense of “danger” was still slight.

However, it gradually turned into a very real terror.

“Th-the outside doors can’t open!”

“The windows are impossible to open, too! It’s clouded over and I can’t see out!”

“Break it.”

“It-it’s also hopeless, it doesn’t break even if I strike it with a chair!”

“.....O, oi, where did that come from!?”

In the dim corridor of the school, a small shadow with long hair was slowly approaching.

Beautiful black hair that shimmered gently. An elaborate, doll-like perfect beauty.....

She had red pupils and bloody crimson fangs, and the young girl who had the presence of a monster, caused the men’s screams of terror to resonate throughout the dark school building.

The adults were running about screaming while they tried to escape from the school building with no exit.

Chasing after them, a small, cute little girl.

The men ran away, but were overtaken, and at their wits’ end, they were torn apart.

These men, who had lived in the underworld had scorned the weak up until now, were unable to even think of resisting. Threatening others with their fists, they would be obeyed by the general public who had frightened expressions on their faces when dealing with them.

But these men, even if they did survive this, would never be able to live in that kind of shady world again.

Because this world, there was someone who looked so [Weak], was actually a hidden [Monster] who was crushing them like insects.

"It's coming, it's comiiiiing AHHHHHHHHHHH!"

pan, pan, one of the black-clothed men had discharged his gun towards her, but the girl wasn't even hit.

As he had shot his last bullet, the girl had poked her finger in space as if there she was poking a forehead, and as if he had been shot by a gun, his head exploded.

"D-d-d-DIIIIIIEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!"

As the hoodlum thrust out his dagger wildly at the little girl, she grabbed the blade gently with her fingers, and flung the blade and its owner towards the men who were trying to escape through the other end of the corridor.

Seeing his companions who had run with him being toyed with and flung about like the pieces of some plastic toy, the man ran into the restrooms.

katsun...katsun... the sound of those tiny loafers pattered down the corridor.

The man hiding inside the bathroom held his breath as he waited for her to pass by, but the sound of the footsteps never got fainter, and with a *knockknock*, she began to knock on the doors of the toilet cubicles one by one.

knock.....

“.....ii”

The door he was hiding behind was knocked on, but the man clamped a hand over his mouth and held down his scream.

And then the door next to his cubicle was rapped on, and the man who had lost all of his strength from the tension sagged and leaned on the thin partition.....

DON!

“HiyaaaaaaAAAAAAAAA!?”

Again, the cubicle door he was in was hit, and the man shrieked out instinctively.

DONDONDONDONDONDONDONDONDONDONDONDON!

"UAAA

The door was hammered repeatedly with a terrifying power, and the hinges flew off, the door smashed, and a hole was opened in the panel boards.

Seeing that girl's face from that hole smiling with her fangs bared, a scream that echoed throughout the school leaked out of the man's mouth.

"Hiiiiieee!?"

Hearing that scream of someone in their death throes, the fake taxi driver, Shinohara, yelled out and tried to draw attention.

"That brat, that brat, that brat, that brat aaAAAAHHHHHH"

Curling up in the corner of the science classroom where he had barricaded himself, Shinohara waited for the fear to pass.

That damned, brazen child who had stabbed him with a pencil. He had planned to ask Kyoji to let him torture that girl to death with his own hands when the time came to get rid of her.

Shinohara had already crossed beyond the boundary of understanding into a world where a child was killing him.

"What is that....."

Shinohara was shaking while holding his head, unaware that he couldn't hear any sound from the surroundings.

Had someone been killed? Had she killed everyone and gone away somewhere else.....?

"....."

Shinohara chewed his nails and asked himself while trembling.

She might still be there. She might not even exist. Shinohara stooped over, hoping to not be seen as he hid under the science classroom table.

A little bit more..... surely, if there was nothing up to the door, that monster should have gone away somewhere else.

And just then, when he had relaxed and let his heart hope again,

"....."

His eyes met those of the girl, who was crouching under the table.

“HIYAAA

Screaming like his throat was being torn out, Shinohara backpedaled on all fours and ran all the way.

“Yaiaaaaaa!”

A small hand was holding his ankle.

“.....Hiyahhh...”

Shinohara leaked out a strange voice as his eyes rolled back into his head, and after one last quiver, his heart stopped.

* * *

“The ghost story of the school.....”

Excuse me, it seems I overdid it for a moment.....

Hey, it’s that thing. It’s one of those test-of-courage things that people get strangely enthusiastic over... or something like that?

But it’s different from a test of courage from that if you get found, you die instantly.

Well, since their soul was being collected, isn’t it nice.....?

Yes..... I am a [Demon].

I don’t think I did anything wrong when I laughed out explosively when I realized it.

My memory was still kind of jumbled, but I finally understood that I was not a [Human].

That was what that [Black Cat] wanted to tell me.

It told me what I really was.....

Surely that [Black Cat] that knew of the [Truth] behind my clouded memory, and is the key to me recovering my memories.

Surely, I am “someone” that that black cat knows.

When I recalled the black cat, something clawed up from the depths of my heart, but it didn't come out completely.

".....I will see you again."

That's what I thought. And there were things to do now.

A Demon feeds on the "souls" of humans.

I got excited by the malicious intent of others, because I subconsciously wanted that delicious soul.

I don't want pure and innocent souls. I wanted a rich soul that had been steeped in malice and hatred.

I recovered the souls of the hoodlums and the black-clothed men, but their taste was monotonous and hollow like eating candy floss.

The soul of that uncle, Kidou, had a reasonably good taste. Still, although it had been aged, it wasn't delicious enough, and it just stimulated the appetite after eating a soul for the first time in so long.

... I... seem to really have quit being a [Human Being].

".....Just two people left."

Well, shall we proceed with the main dish of the day?

Chapter 16: The Demon's Mercy

"Yeah, I think things have settled down."

The Demonic impulses that I'd had when I remembered my own identity have resolved themselves. I was a starving demon.... Although I had been offended by those people if I do say so myself, I should still reflect on how I played around.

".....But"

Two more people..... Kyoji and Grandpa Kuon can't be overlooked as it is. Although their land speculation I could overlook, they'd tried to harm me, and if I left them alone, they might do the same thing to Misa.

Also.....

"Because they know my true identity, I don't think things will end so easily like this."

..... What is with that villainous-sounding line?

Now then, where did those two people hide?

A while ago, while using the demonic language..... the [Spirit Language]? I'd 'sealed' all the ways out of this school.

If it wasn't someone with more power than I had, they couldn't even force an air molecule in.

Because of all the hoodlums making so much noise in here up until a while ago, the oxygen's getting thin, but we can still go on for a few more days before the oxygen runs out.

Even for demons, willpower is important. Right now, just because I ate a lot of souls I'm not really feeling greedy. Well, that was inconsequential.

".....fumu."

My fragmented memories also emerged, and they were a mess, but after rearranging and looking for things that I could use from them, a bit of 'knowledge' that seemed useful came up.

“.....[Summon].....”

I used my power to create a small summoning formation in my hands.

If I can sort out my memory, I think I can draw a more complex summoning circle, but for now, that’s enough.

From my hands, black pieces fell with a clatter to the floor.

“.....”

I might not know what I wanted, but it was supposed to have summoned the lowest [Spiritual life form] from the surroundings, but what I summoned was dried “seaweed”.

As a last resort, I scattered it across the corpses that were lying around, and the wakame seaweed that absorbed the blood began to move into the body, manipulating them as it groaned with an [Uboo~Uboo~], getting up.

This just feels kind of horrible.

“.....Well, whatever. You, look for humans that are still alive.”

[Ubo~]

What was with that, I wonder... I wonder if I was under a seafood products curse.

* * *

“What, what is that!? Explain it!”

In the dimly-lit AV room, Lord Kuon was deeply confused by the absurdity and chaos. He barked at the young man while blabbering.

The broadcasting room, with its soundproof walls and thickly-walled doors, was perfect as a bunker, but there was no guarantee that they wouldn’t be noticed by that ridiculous monster that exceeded common sense with the commotion they were making.

While he thought that, Kyoji remained with a calm and collected attitude, and bowed his head to Lord Kuon while pointing something out.

“That is definitely the daughter of the Toukaki family.”

“Toukaki? It’s a rising family from the last generation. But that doesn’t matter! *That thing* is what I’m asking about!”

As far as he could tell, it really was the youngest daughter of the Toukaki family, Yuzu. Why did she turn into that, and how did she gain the power to bend, twist, and kill a large adult?

Kyoji was also confused from the start, and up until now fear still gripped him, but as someone who was familiar with the circumstances of the Kuon family, he came to a single conclusion.

“When accidents happened on sites, and I requested assistance from *those people*, I saw similar things.”

“Accidents..... You mean that thing!”

“Yes. I guess this girl might have been possessed by a ‘vengeful spirit’.”

Sometimes, when they tried to do land speculation by force, there were ‘accidents’.

Even when they asked the shrines around the area, they couldn’t get rid of it, so when they came to their wits’ end, they asked the institution that the politicians relied on to dispel the cause.

The largest demon-hunting organization in the country: the monks of [Oyama].

Kyoji had once seen a ‘vengeful spirit’ possess stray dogs in a region that had no sacred tree. A dog that had bitten several of the Kuon family’s people to death in the twinkling of an eye, with a repulsive appearance that continued to cackle even after taking a bullet, it stuck firmly in Kyoji’s mind.

“Then, call the monks of [Oyama]! That is not a child...”

“But, cellphones have stopped working.”

“What!?”

Lord Kuon picked up his phone himself in an attempt to make a call.

“Sir, you are in danger here.”

The broadcasting room was not completely surrounded by walls, and one

section of it faced the hallway with a large, fixed window. He feared that even though the window was one way, that ‘monster’ would see them through the window from the corridor.

“Eeh, Kyoji, you run out and make contact for me!”

“..... Understood.”

He didn’t move in front of the window, and sighing internally at Lord Kuon who glossed over his own faults with a shout, Kyoji murmured.

“..... Is this a good time?”

BANG!!

“Gyah!?”

Suddenly, the thick window glass shook under the force of a blow, causing Lord Kuon to curl up and yelp.

“Wha-”

“This is.....”

His subordinates were leaving bloody prints on the glass, their eyes blank. Even though they were clearly no longer alive, but they moved and shuddered at their wrists broke hitting the glass.

“Tsch, they got here.”

Kyoji clicked his tongue as he tried to leave the broadcasting room alone without Lord Kuon.

“K-Kyoji, I”

“Sir, I will head out *alone*.”

“Wh-what are you saying...”

“In any case, even if you don’t die, returning to politics will be difficult. Shouldn’t you take responsibility for this?”

Slipping through the hands of the moving dead who were sluggish with their grasping, Kyoji left the man who was his master and started running.

“Kyoji!!.....”

uAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHH!!”

From behind Kyoji, who didn’t turn back, came the screams of Lord Kuon who had been attacked by the dead, but for Kyoji, this was no longer his problem.

Kyoji did not serve his master seriously, unlike his father.

His own rise in the world, starting from the bottom of the political world and rising up, had only been stepping stones.

Therefore, there was no longer any use for Lord Kuon, either as a person, or a politician. Following him to that place was all for the sake of making a decoy so that he could make his escape to a safe place.

But, as the dead bodies began to move, he had to use that ‘decoy’ much earlier.

Some of the dead bodies with expressions of anguish on their faces still hadn’t started moving, but he couldn’t tell when they would.

“.....No, I can’t die yet.”

Kyoji thought for a while, and then headed to the rooftop.

The door downwards had been sealed with a strange power, and that ‘monster’ would mostly be wandering around.

He was certain that the rooftop door had been broken, and should have been removed, but remembered that it had only been blocked with a blue sheet without being repaired after it had become an abandoned school.

With Kyoji’s physical prowess, he should be able to get to the ground floor by climbing down the drainpipe, even if it was from the roof.

Running out of breath as he ran up to the rooftop, Kyoji tore off the blue tarp that blocked his way to the roof and breathed in the outside air for the first time in a long while.

“Now, where do I.....”

Kyoji muttered as he looked around, stopping his feet as he looked for a place to get down.

No one should have been there..... but at the entrance leading to the school

building, the girl that he absolutely didn't want to meet at all was smiling up at him with her crimson eyes and fangs.

“.....u...a.....”

Looking at her dragging around Lord Kuon by the neck, grasping it firmly in her hands, Kyoji faintly knitted his eyebrows.

“.....He's still alive, huh?”

If he survived by any chance, it would interfere with Kyoji's future plans. As he thought of that, he muttered to himself.

“Oh my. I only asked them to find you. You didn't have to run away, you know?”

“.....,”

Kyoji didn't think that the girl who was supposed to be possessed by evil spirits would answer, and caught his breath.

“.....Unless..... you're fully conscious?”

“Yes, of course. I'm not in the hobby of having dreams while awake.”

“.....”

In that short conversation, Kyoji understood that that monster before him was exactly the “Yuzu” who he had been talking to when they were coming here.

“.....Why are you keeping that man alive?”

If Yuzu was conscious, there was a possibility that she could be deceived by his words. Even if she was smart, she was still ‘a grade schooler’, and Kyoji tried to probe her with conversation.

“You said so yourself. It would be a problem if nobody took responsibility.”

“!”

Yuzu seemed to know the conversation that happened between Kyoji and Lord Kuon.

In front of Kyoji, who was tongue-tied, Yuzu gently lifted up Lord Kuon with

one hand and stabbed her fangs into his shoulder.

“.....puhaaaaaa”

Yuzu who lifted her head after sipping blood, threw him down where she stood, and Lord Kuon didn't even groan, and was merely looking up at the sky with a blank gaze.

“You don't have to worry. You won't remember anything, and you'll just become a cripple.”

“.....”

To be one step short of being a vegetable unable to do anything, that was taking responsibility. Kyoji realized that various connections related to this incident might not end up being exposed if that happened.

“Yuzu-san..... could you please overlook this?”

“Oh, but why? There's no reason for me to go easy on you.Why, weren't you thinking that I should just *die honorably*.....?”

Kyoji desperately sought an out, fully flustered on the inside.

He had knowledge of martial-arts, but now it was meaningless. Martial arts were a technique for the weak to defeat the strong, but it was impossible for the cat to defeat the tiger.

“.....”

Kyoji took that moment to turn his back and flee.

Even if he took measures according to his plan, there would only be tragic “death” waiting for him, since he had only planned for “human beings”.

So, Kyoji decided it was sink-or-swim, and jumped off the rooftop. There was a possibility that he would survive if he could grab onto something, whether it was a drainspout, some window frame, or even a tree branch along the way down.

“Wha!?”

In front of Kyoji who had jumped over the wire mesh of the roof, there was a *hole* in the sky, opening itself up.

A black hole about 1 meter in diameter started to suck in Kyoji along with the neighboring air.

“What is thiissssssssss AAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHH!?”

While light and darkness and the very air itself were being swallowed into the space, a severe pain crushed his whole body, and Kyoji cried out.

“As expected, it’s only to that extent with half-baked knowledge, huh.”

As if answering a question, Yuzu had a troubled expression on her face as she spoke.

“Because I picked it out of my memories, it was only to that degree..... I guess I’ll give Kyoji a chance for taking the trouble.”

“.....Chan...ce?”

“Through there, living things cannot reach you, and I don’t know what [dimension] it’ll go to. I won’t make a move on you. Consider yourself lucky.”

“.....Y.....es”

“I ate half of that grandpa’s soul, so I’m feeling quite full right now.”

Kyoji realized that the little girl in front of him was a far more daunting existence than a mere evil spirit or vengeful spirit.

“I..... I, dying in a place like this, is impossibleeeeeeeeeee! ”

“Is that so? Well then, do your best. There isn’t any air in there, so I guess you’re confident in your lung capacity?”

“.....I AAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHaAa...a.....”

As he gave his last cry, Kidou Kyoji fell into the space between dimensions.

And.....

“.....who?”

As Yuzu turned her head back slowly, on the roof of the water tower, was a small, black-masked shadow staring at her silently.

The black-masked person formed a tiny black hole in her hand, and putting

their hands into it, took out a huge sword that was as tall as they were, turning the tip towards Yuzu slowly.

“.....You, are you a ‘reincarnator’?”

Chapter 17: The End of the Incident

The black-masked person took out an incomprehensibly huge sword from nowhere and came towards me.

How dexterous. I wonder if they hid that sword in their pants.

When I released the seal for the sake of letting Kyoji get onto the rooftop, it seems a suspicious person managed to enter in the small amount of time.

..... now that I mention it, they have a certain unique aura and “presence”.

“What are you doing here, Shijima Yuuki-kun?”

“.....”

When I called the name, both Yuuki-kun’s presence and the other person shook.

“.....How did you know?”

“eh,..... aren’t we in the same class?”

“.....is-is that so?”

A lie. As expected of someone who’s never talked to classmates, I only had a vague recollection of his face.

But now, with the awareness of a Demon, I could see that his soul wasn’t “ordinary”. I just didn’t know what it meant until just now.

When I returned to human form, he was still wary, but Yuuki-kun’s tension lessened considerably, and he jumped off the water tower, coming closer without pointing the sword at me.

“Yuuki-kun..... who exactly are you?”

“Answer my question first. Are you a “reincarnator”?”

Reincarnator..... Those who died but whose soul did not return to their [World], and those who were born again while leaving their bodies behind.

But his question didn’t mean that. He was asking if I remembered my previous life. In that sense, I am what Yuuki-kun calls a “reincarnator”.

“My memory is hazy. I have knowledge of things that “I” do not remember.”

“Really..... Reincarnation makes the memory vague. I’ll believe your words for now.”

For now..... huh. He won’t set aside his weapons even though he lowered them. Well, I, too, am wary of him, so it can’t be helped.

Besides..... this particular “presence”, is a little familiar.

This was a person with the [Power] to hurt “me”.

“In other words, you’re a reincarnator yourself.....?”

“.....Ah, that’s right. There are various circumstances. Are you..... a different world’s ‘magician’? Moreover, one that seems to have forsaken humanity.....”

Yuuki-kun was watching everything happening up until now. I didn’t know where he was watching it from, but it seems that he saw it all and thought I was some sort of mad mage.

“.....And so? Would you have let such a dangerous knave go?”

“.....Oi, don’t release your [Magic Power] so easily. There is only a little magic in this world. I don’t know where you are from, but understand that this world is ‘distorted.’”

“.....Fuuuhn.”

I see, so the power inside of me was [Magic Power].

“Hey, about this world being distorted...”

“I’ll explain more later. There are plenty of things I want to know too, but if you don’t leave quickly, there’ll be trouble later.”

“Oh well..... Let’s talk in school next time. After that.....”

As he trailed off, Yuuki-kun stilled his feet, and cast his eyes towards me again.

“Yuuki-kun. I have a name, it’s “Yuzu,” use it.”

“.....Understood.”

And with that short line, Shijima Yuuki-kun leapt off the rooftop and faded

into the dark of the night.

Will we be making a mutually profitable relationship? Well, as long as it benefits each other, we can depend on each other even though we don't trust each other.

I told the dead zombies to carry grandpa Kuon to the entrance, and then when they were done, I told them to all die, and jumped off the roof, away from this terrible scene. I wonder if this event will be wrapped in mystery.

"Yuzu.....!"

Moving a few kilometers from the school compound, I heard a voice calling my name.

"Ah..... Onzada-kun?"

When I turned around, I saw Onzada-kun running towards me with an exhausted gait.

I turned towards him, and Onzada-kun, who ran up with his hands on his knees, completely out of breath, had a look of sullen relief on his face.

"Onzada-kun..... Why are you here?"

".....Well, didn't Yuzu sent a strange e-mail without anything written?!"

"Eh..... Aah~"

At that time, when I was just feeling for my phone, did I send off an e-mail to Onzada-kun?

.....Oh? But then how did Onzada-kun figure out where I was?

"Really, Yuzu, you're really on your own pace..... I was worried."

When Onzada-kun's eyes turned gentle, and patted my head, I leaned hard against his chest.

"Ow."

..... Something like this, I somehow feel like this has happened before.
But.

"Onzada-kun, you stink!"

“How mean! I ran dozens of kilometers here, but I worried so much after getting that strange e-mail that I endured it.”

Onzada-kun laughed mischievously, and then rubbed his sweaty chest into my face. I’ll remember this later.

“Yuzu, did your phone run out of power? I couldn’t call you.”

said Onzada-kun, finally releasing me after a while.

“Ah, now that I think about it, it got taken by my kidnappers.”

“Haa? Are you serious about the kidnapping!?”

“Un, yeah. Well, it’s okay anyway, since I got away. Isn’t the conclusion alright?”

“Yuzu sure is relaxed about this..... I’ll lend you my phone later, so please contact your house. Your parents are going to be incredibly worried.”

“.....uuu.”

As I ducked away thinking of my family’s faces, Onzada-kun patted my head with a *ponpon*.

“From now on, if you are in danger, call me right away, okay? I’m going to get stronger from now on..... to protect Yuzu.”

“.....uun.”

Something was set alight inside of me as I heard Onzada-kun’s words..... I watched as a thin, translucent chain stretched out of my hand, and connected to the heart of Onzada-kun.

..... What’s this.

* * *

When I returned home, I was scolded while crying tears of worry.

As they told me later that it seems that my situation was just one step away from them contacting the police and turning this accident into an incident.

For some reason Ouji-kun’s Niku family was contacted, and they were pressured to pressure the central government to move. why did the Niku

family help?

Also, the Kuon family didn't appear at all through this incident. On the contrary, they even concluded that there had been no mass murder at all inside of that abandoned school.

..... did the "country" change things behind the scenes?

After that, I was grounded at home for more than a month. Although I wasn't grounded from school, I mostly I went to the hospital for physical examinations and the psychiatric department. It was natural because a child had been kidnapped, but of course I felt nothing.

Doing all that took about a month?

And as the month passed like that, several more months passed while I got frustrated organizing my memories until, one day,

"Yuzu, I'd like to have a word with you, so come to Father's study, okay?"

".....hmm? Yes~."

I replied at once, and then followed Mother to Father's study.

What did they want to talk about? Was it about the kidnapping? But since Grandpa Kuon was admitted into the hospital and was insensate, I didn't think they'd make any progress.

..... Was my identity revealed? Nah, I don't think that was it.

"Father, what did you want to talk to me about?"

"Ohh, you're here. Yuzu, come sit."

My father was in the office, and my mother sat down with me on the sofa.

"A formal apology has come from the new head of the Kuon family. Yuzu doesn't need to know the details of it. I don't want you to tell Kouki-kun about this, so I'd like you to not worry about the subject. Is that alright?"

"Mmm."

I have no issues since I don't want to cause Kouki-kun to be awkward around me.

“And..... regarding that ramen shop in the shopping district.....”

“.....eh?”

“Wait, wait, it’s not a bad thing. The two of them have been officially adopted by the shopkeeper, Mr. Iino, and they will take over his shop. After he hands over the shop, he intends to retire to the countryside.”

“Ehhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh.”

Will dad-chan become the new shopkeeper? It’s good that Misa and dad-chan will be happy, but will the shop be alright?

“Ah~..... We were also a little immature. It was good that you children were kind enough to be worried about them, but it ended up that you were kidnapped because the adults were hesitant. So, we are providing them the new line of noodles from the Toukaki company, and we decided to give them a leg up with their new business with the new bamboo shoots products along with Nikuno Ham.”

“Ooohh~.....”

So there was such a thing. I knew that new products were being developed at Nikuno Ham, but would they normally be “sold” to new stores?

Well, that certainly was a good piece of news.

“That’s all.Ah~, that’s right, Yuzu. Onzada-kun, who came to try to protect you is quite the decent young man. Are the two of you getting along well?”

“Eh? Yes, we talk often at school?”

“Muu, is that so? Well..... Although this isn’t decided yet, I should respect Yuzu’s opinion for once.....”

“.....Father?”

Why would you say something like that? When I turned my gaze at my mother while thinking so, she breathed a sigh at my dad and told me.

“From the head of the Niku family has come to talk about wanting an ‘engagement’ of Yuzu with Ouji-kun, so what do you think.....?”

